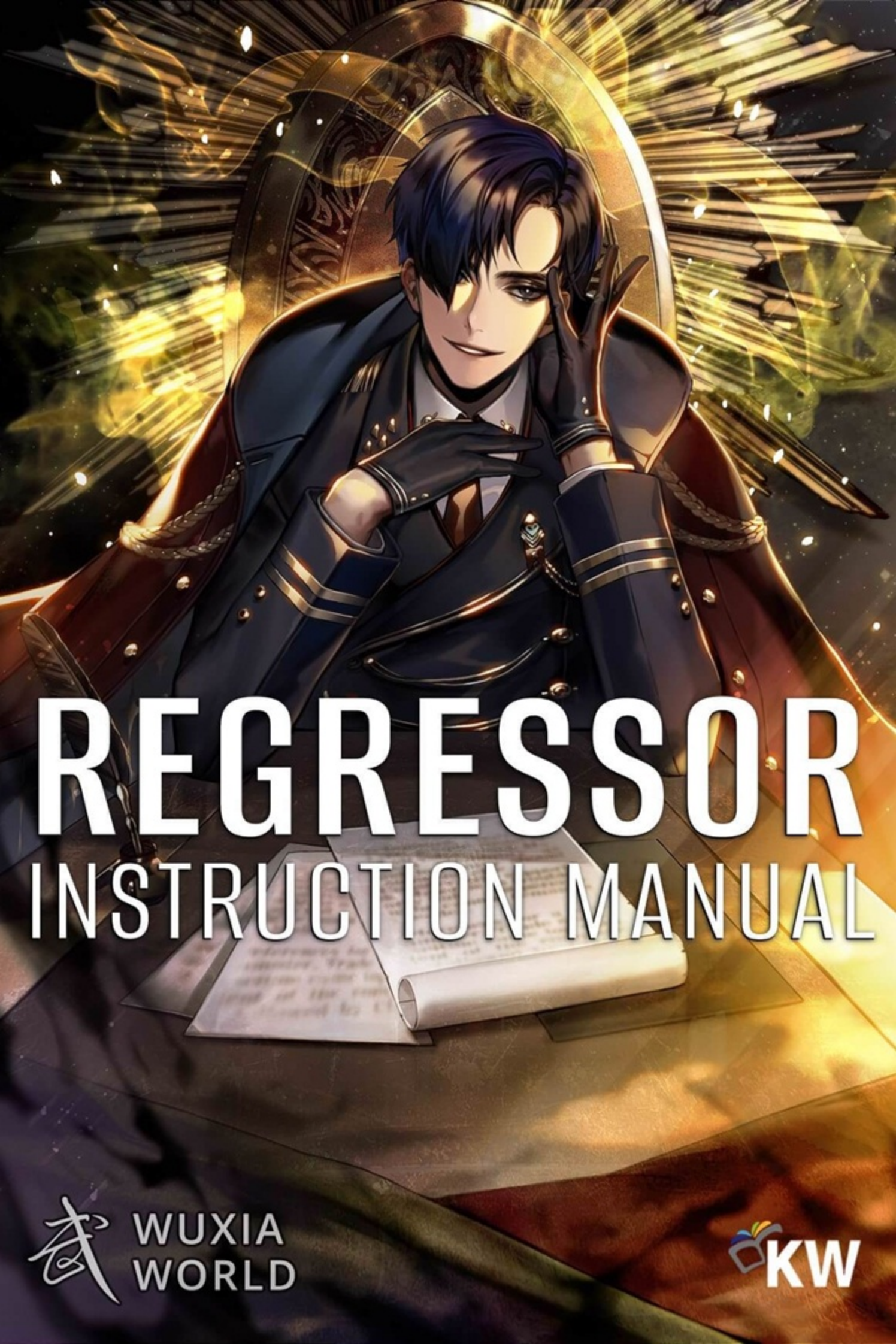
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
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REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 3 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 100
OLD FORCES (1)

After arriving at the guild house, the expedition party quickly unloaded their luggage and headed to the basement to check the guild master's corpse. I thought about it for a moment before deciding that following them was the right thing to do. I wanted to talk to Lee Ji-Hye right away, but it wouldn't be bad to talk to her after checking the guild's situation. When I glanced at her and nodded, she did the same. She knew exactly what was going on without me having to explain it to her and I had an idea of what she was thinking about.

'Match-made in heaven?'

The match-made in heaven comment that the system made before could have been referring to this.

'We do think alike… '

Our way of thinking was pretty similar and not recruiting her to the Blue Guild was one of the biggest mistakes I had ever made. I had to use her a bit more.

'Tsk.'

Of course, the position we were in now wasn't so bad either.

"…"

Anyway, Lee Ji-Hye was an outsider to the guild, so we decided to part ways temporarily. After seeing her out, I headed to the guild's basement and saw a space that was neatly organized. There was a man lying in a coffin in a room filled with white flowers. He looked a bit old and by looking at the wounds all over his body, I had an idea what kind of person he was. He had a mustache that covered his chin and gray hair.

'40s maybe?'

He could be in his 50s as well. It was difficult to tell what his exact age was since magic had the effect of slowing down the aging process, but just by looking at him, he was obviously old. He closed his eyes very calmly and as expected, I heard people crying.

"*Heuuuk…"*

"Master…"

"*Heuuk…* mister, mister. You said you would live forever. Mister… *heuuk*…"

I couldn't relate to their sadness. I didn't feel sad as I quietly watched the situation, but seeing the others crying made me realize how sad they were.

'Mister?'

Among them, Lee Sang-Hee was the one that had the biggest reaction. She looked like she was maintaining her composure before entering here, but after she entered, it seemed like she wasn't able to control herself anymore. I didn't know what kind of relationship they had, but I knew for sure that it wasn't an ordinary one. The way she hugged the corpse and kept crying was similar to the reaction people had when a family member died.

'Maybe they're lovers.'

Based on their age, it wasn't a convincing assumption, but she reacted as if the person she loved the most had died. Naturally, I thought that it would be best to leave her be and I saw a few members of party two quietly heading upstairs. Our party did the same. Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he wanted to comfort Lee Sang-Hee, so he remained by her side. Park Deok-Gu cried with the others, while Kim Ye-Ri quietly headed upstairs with her head down.

"I'm sure he's in a comfortable place."

After letting her holy magic flow into the corpse, Sun Hee-Young showed respect for the guild master and started heading out. I did the same. I headed upstairs while Jung Ha-Yan held onto my arm tightly.

"Ha-Yan," I said.

“Yes, Oppa?” she asked.

“Did you feel… anything strange?” I asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Like flow of mana… or traces on the corpse. Since I’m not sensitive to magic, I’m asking if you felt anything,” I explained.

“Oh, I see. I didn’t find anything strange. I’ll need to take a closer look in order to find out… I was standing far away and only saw the body for a moment…” she answered.

“*Hm…*”

Jung Ha-Yan looked guilty, so when I slowly patted her head, she started humming as if she was starting to feel better.

I had a lot of thoughts in my head. Jung Ha-Yan was sensitive to magic. Regardless of her magic stats, her potential stat was above legendary, so it was like a passive skill to her. The fact that Jung Ha-Yan didn’t feel even a tiny flow of magic or even saw traces of magic on the corpse meant that the guild master hadn’t been murdered with magic.

‘Ugh… ’

As soon as I headed upstairs, I saw the members of party two. They were hanging out in the guild’s bar. When I approached them with Hwang Jung-Yeon in the center, I saw them welcoming me. I guess this could be considered as one of the benefits I gained from the dungeon.

“Oh, Mr. Ki-Young.”

“I’m sorry for your loss,” I said.

“It’s fine. We’re sad, but compared to Miss Lee Sang-Hee…”

“The two must’ve been close,” I said.

“Yes, I’m sure she’s devastated since they were together since the tutorial…”

“They were together since the tutorial?”

“Yes. Now that I think about it, I guess party seven wouldn’t really know about it. Miss Lee Sang-Hee and Mr. Joo Seung-Joon were the ones that created the Blue Guild. When the two arrived in Lindel from the tutorial dungeon, they were the first ones to settle down. Since Miss Lee Sang-Hee was still underage back then, it happened a long time ago. I would say about 15 years ago,” a member of the party explained.

Since Lee Sang-Hee was 33 years old right now, 15 years ago meant that she was 18 years old back then. If people from other worlds started to arrive here 20 years ago, then she could be considered one of the pioneers.

“It has been a while.”

“It has. It hasn’t been that long since we joined the guild, so we don’t know the details, but Miss Lee Sang-Hee followed the guild master like a father. Even when the master got cursed, she tried to go to the dungeon by herself.”

“I see…”

“I recall them always moving together. When they first built the guild… and even during their first dungeon and hunt. I’m not trying to belittle her, but if it wasn’t for the master, then Miss Lee Sang-Hee wouldn’t be here right now.”

When I glanced over at Hwang Jung-Yeon, I noticed her nodding.

“I feel a bit sad too. I wasn’t in the Blue Guild as long as Miss Lee Sang-Hee, but I’ve been here for quite a while now. Mr. Joo Seung-Joon is…”

“Yes?”

“He was an amazing person. He knew how to sacrifice for other people, but more than that, he cherished us a lot. The reason why he didn’t expand the guild was that it would become difficult for him to take care of each and every guild member if the guild grew bigger… Everyone in the guild liked Mr. Seung-Joon. Even party five transferred here all because of him, but of course… they’re no longer here,” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“…”

“I thought that I’ve gotten used to parting ways with people, but I guess not,” she added.

I didn’t know anything about this Joo Seung-Joon person, but I now understood that he was a very kind person. In addition…

“He was strong.”

‘He’s competent.’

He was a very competent person.

I was actually suspicious about the Blue Guild’s situation. Lee Sang-Hee was strong, but she wasn’t an ideal leader and even though she had a good personality, that wasn’t enough to lead a guild. The guild had a centralized system where everything was based on Joo Seung-Joon’s decisions. Since he wasn’t here anymore, the group would obviously fall apart and it was reasonable for an old man like Lee Seol-Ho to act the way he did.

“Was Lee Seol-Ho with them from the beginning as well?” I asked.

“Yes.”

‘I knew it.’

“I heard that Mr. Seol-Ho has been with them since the tutorial dungeon. He often worked as a combatant and contributed a lot to helping Blue Guild find its place. Of course, he and the guild master argued about everything, but I know that they still maintained a good relationship. The same thing goes for Miss Lee Sang-Hee, but it’s been different recently…”

“I see. She must’ve trusted the guild master a lot,” I said.

“Yes, as you can see… I’m sure Mr. Seol-Ho is heartbroken as well,” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“Who knows if he’s really in pain…” I mumbled.

“Excuse me?” she asked.

“It’s nothing,” I said, dismissively.

When she tapped on the table, I noticed Hwang Jung-Yeon’s anxious face.

“Now, could everyone head upstairs, please? I have some things I need to discuss with Mr. Ki-Young…” she announced.

“Of course, Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon. We’ll take our leave,” a member said.

I guess there were a lot of things she wanted to talk about with me. When I glanced over at Jung Ha-Yan she looked at me with a pitiful look as if she was asking whether she needed to go too. When I shook my head, her face immediately brightened up.

“What did you say just now, Mr. Ki-Young?” Hwang Jung-Yeon asked.

“It’s just… I think that people are forgetting about the possibility that he could have been murdered,” I answered.

“Murdered?” she asked.

“Of course, it’s just an assumption,” I added.

“…”

“I thought you would be thinking the same, but I guess not,” I said.

“No, I honestly had the same thought. I didn’t rule out that possibility, but… after looking at Mr. Joo Seung-Joon’s corpse…”

“Are you saying that you couldn’t find anything?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“It was the same for her too. He didn’t have any physical injuries when she saw him and she couldn’t find any traces of magic either. Right, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“That’s right, Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

“But on this continent, magic isn’t the only way to kill people. I think it’ll be best to leave the possibility open. There isn't anything that could be said as the motive for

murder, but if the guild master is gone and we also disappear, then aren't there a few people that would benefit from it? Wouldn't that be considered a motive?" I explained.

"Exactly, what you're saying is true," she commented.

"No matter what it is, I'm sure we'll find something if we investigate the body. If you convince Miss Lee Sang-Hee…" I suggested.

"Of course, I'll tell her about it…"

"The faster the better. The vestiges of magic that we weren't able to find may disappear. If we were even a little bit late, we probably won't have the time to check the corpse and the murderers may try to hold the funeral as soon as possible. I'm really glad that we arrived before any of that happened," I said.

"You're right."

"We may find something else so I think it'll be best if I participate in the autopsy along with Miss Sun Hee-Young. Alchemy or holy magic could've been used… anyway, we have to leave all possibilities open," I suggested.

"*Whoo*… I'm feeling a bit uncomfortable," Hwang Jung-Yeon mumbled.

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"Being suspicious of a fellow guild member. Miss Lee Sang-Hee… must feel the same way, right?" she asked.

I knew for sure that she would feel worse than what Hwang Jung-Yeon was feeling. If she had experienced many life and death situations with that old man, Lee Seol-Ho, since the tutorial dungeon, then it would make the issue more complicated.

'There's no way.'

We ended our conversation with me comforting myself. The situation that I didn't want to be suspicious of was unfolding and what was even more ridiculous was that the person who could see the situation objectively was me since I was the closest to being an outsider. Sometimes, looking at the situation from the outside rather than from the inside gave a better view.

Just when I was thinking while tapping the table…

“What are you all talking about?”

It was a very unpleasant voice. When I glanced over, I saw a face that I didn’t want to see.

“Who knows?” I answered.

It was Lee Seol-Ho and his lackeys.

CHAPTER 101
OLD FORCES (2)

“What are you all talking about?”

When I glanced over, I saw a face that I didn’t want to see. It was Lee Seol-Ho and his lackeys.

“Is Miss Lee Sang-Hee still…”

“Yes, she’s still with the guild master in the basement. I guess she’s very sad about his death,” he answered.

“It’s understandable since he was like a father to her. The master was a special person to Miss Lee Sang-Hee, but of course, that applies to everyone else…” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“I agree because I even had a hard time sleeping at first. Who knew something like this would happen when no one was here. I feel bad for not being there when he passed away. By the way, congratulations again on your safe return, Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon. About the other party members… it’s such a shame,” he said.

His voice was filled with kindness and of course, it wasn’t toward me. He was talking to Hwang Jung-Yeon, the leader of party two. It was as if their argument before leaving for the expedition never happened. Even Hwang Jung-Yeon herself seemed surprised by the gramp’s change in attitude because her eyes widened.

‘Pffft.’

I couldn’t help but laugh because it was obvious what he was up to. He definitely didn’t expect us to return. It didn’t have to do with whether Lee Seol-Ho really killed the guild master or not, but I was certain that he yelled in delight when the guild master died. If the scums didn’t return from the expedition, then the Blue Guild would basically belong to those old gramps. That was why they delayed in sending reinforcements and wasted time, but during that situation, the expedition party suddenly returned.

'I'm sure they were surprised.'

If I were in their situation, I would have sweet-talked us too, however, the fact that they weren't doing it to me meant that they weren't that desperate. Trying to keep their dignity during this situation was a funny thing to do. I noticed them talking to Hwang Jung-Yeon again.

"I'm very relieved."

"*Oh.*"

"We were actually getting worried because it was taking some time to create a support party and the guild master suddenly passed away… I asked others for help since I didn't want to lose Miss Lee Sang-Hee either, but no one was available. I was worried, but… I'm glad to see that you're doing well. I'm really… really glad that you came back alive," Lee Seol-Ho said.

The way his eyes started tearing up was a sight to see. If he wasn't being sincere, then his acting skills were top-notch and was worth receiving the best actor award at the Academy Award. Even Hwang Jung-Yeon didn't seem happy either after hearing what I said, but hearing her talk to him didn't seem like a bad idea either.

'Let's watch their reactions.'

"I think it was a bit too late for you to do that… I wonder if there was a different reason, Mr. Seol-Ho."

"I don't understand what you mean," he said.

"I'm just saying my thoughts. It's understandable for the Red Mercenary Group since Hee-Ra unnie hasn't arrived yet, but I'm sure the Black Swan Guild was available. There are dozens of people looking for jobs at the plaza… I thought that it wouldn't be that difficult to create a support party. Of course, creating one in such a short amount of time is impossible, but… our time there hadn't been short," Hwang Jung-Yeon explained.

"T-That's…"

"Well, even if we ended the conversation here just because it was all in the past… hm… actually, can you explain in detail exactly how the guild master died?" she

asked.

“It’s just like I said. He quietly passed away three days ago. I guess he could be considered lucky for dying in his sleep,” Lee Seol-Ho answered.

“So you’re saying that he died quietly, right?” she asked.

“That’s right.”

“Have you thought about the possibility that someone could’ve murdered him?” she asked him.

“What do you…”

“It’s like I said. You said a moment ago that you couldn’t protect him during his last moment. That means that no one was in the guild master’s room during that time,” she explained.

“That… right,” he said.

“Based on your reaction, I guess you didn’t consider the fact that he could’ve been murdered,” Hwang Jung-Yeon pointed out.

She didn’t forget to smirk either.

Lee Seol-Ho must have realized that he was being targeted because he had a nasty look on his face.

‘You killed him, right?’

Naturally, the crazy gramp’s face turned red. Lee Seol-Ho was originally a hot-tempered person, so if he didn’t get angry here, he wouldn’t be called a condescending person.

“What are you talking about?!”

“Why are you getting angry, honorable Mr. Lee Seol-Ho?” she asked.

“What do you know?! Are you implying that we killed the guild master?! You’re talking nonsense!” Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

“There’s no need to get all worked up, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho. I never said that our guild members were the ones that murdered him. I was just asking if there were any intruders that night… I think you're overreacting. I don’t understand why you’re reacting this way. *Pffft*.”

“You… how dare… you…”

“Or are you guilty about something?” she asked.

“How dare you say something like that! To someone that’s been protecting the Blue Guild!” he yelled again.

“It doesn’t matter to me how long you’ve been protecting the guild. However…”

“…”

“Why are you talking so rudely to me? We’re both executives of this guild, so don't I have the right to say something? You should be on the ground and apologizing for what happened. So what exactly do you have up your sleeve that you’re yelling at me like this… *huh?*” Hwang Jung-Yeon asked.

“You…”

“You should be careful of what you say, Mr. Seol-Ho. Do you really think that it’ll be over just because the guild master is dead? Yes, he died, but did you really think that was the end? There’s a limit to being incompetent too… we excluded you from entering such a dangerous place and yet, you call yourself an executive when you can’t even protect our own home… what a bunch of bullshit. It’s so ridiculous that I don’t even know what to say…” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“…”

“Shouldn’t you first look into whether there had been an intruder or if there was someone within the guild that could have entered the master’s room? It seems like you’re working hard, Mr. Seol-Ho, but… if you’re incompetent, you should think about giving up your position instead of holding onto it and being a useless person in the guild. Also… what did you say? You couldn’t do anything because it was taking too long to form a support party? Society calls people like you incompetent. I can’t believe you’re using that as an excuse. Did you really think that if you said that, we would just go and be like, ‘Oh, I see! So that’s what happened. How unfortunate,’ and

just accept what you said? Look, you're a smart man so I don't know why you're doing this…" she paused midway.

"…"

"But you should know that this isn't a school. It's not a place where you can just apologize for not being able to do something. To everyone that's been protecting the Blue Guild, if I was the head of the guild, then I would have had your heads. All of your heads!" she yelled.

"You… how dare you!" Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

Magic started to form in his hand. I knew that he wasn't going to aim for me since he wasn't that unreasonable, but it seemed like he had to take out his anger somehow.

'Getting hit by that.'

It would definitely hurt since I was a weak alchemist.

Jung Ha-Yan looked surprised, so she immediately started reciting a spell, but his fist approached me a lot faster. I didn't bother dodging, but that didn't mean that I was a masochist. His attack was pointless and the reason why I didn't bother to dodge was that there wasn't a reason for me to dodge. Why?

"My lovely, Juliena, no need to be so worked up," I said.

Buzz…

It was because of my new support that was pointing at the gramp's neck.

'It's nice having support. Very nice.'

"Th-This is…"

"Oh, it's an item that I coincidentally came across at the dungeon. It seems to have a lot of functions. For example, it has the function to help people with anger management issues. Could you remove your hand, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho? My Juliena is quite aggressive," I told him.

He slowly put his hand down with a dumbfounded look and as he did that, Juliena

started to return to my side. I also noticed Jung Ha-Yan biting her lips.

'Don't be jealous of a sword… '

I wasn't sure why she was jealous of a sword, but it was probably because the sword was able to do something she couldn't. During the crucial moment, she felt ashamed for not being able to protect me from the threat.

"I'll take my leave since I have an appointment, Mr. Seol-Ho," I said.

"…"

"At least write a report on what happened that day. You should write about what the security was like the day the master passed away, whether anyone entered the guild and what the ordinary guild members were like. Oh, you need to also submit a report on how creating the support party got delayed. Based on how you've been acting, we're probably going to have to do another investigation… you should've at least cleaned up your mess so that you won't look so incompetent. That'll make you less of an embarrassment when the ordinary guild members look at you. Let's go, Ha-Yan," I said.

"Okay!"

I didn't feel that bad. Actually, it felt really exhilarating. I couldn't help but smile when I saw the old gramps faces as Jung Ha-Yan hurriedly ran toward me. They looked very angry. If we were at a place where it was just us, it would've been fine, but when the ordinary guild members started coming out due to the commotion, it became a problem. For him, his reputation was important so I was sure that he was really shocked and as expected, I heard people whispering.

"Did you see it just now?"

"What… was that… weapon?"

The majority of them were either admiring it or were inspired by it. The situation was like a well-written script.

'I wonder what's going to happen next.'

Naturally, the old gramps were now wary of us and they may even think that I was

onto something. If they were guilty of something, they were either going to move a bit faster or calmly curl up. Regardless of what they were going to do, I was certain that something was going to happen to them soon. All we had to do was create the issue. When the corner of my lips went up, Jung Ha-Yan cautiously asked a question.

“Oppa.”

“Yeah?”

“Y-You know.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“If… those people really killed the guild master, then… shouldn’t we have kept quiet?”

“About what?”

“You told them just now to submit a report,” she answered.

“*Ahh,* that’s not true. Making a move based on the small number of clues we have is better than not doing anything,” I explained.

She looked as if she didn’t understand. It was a bit interesting how a genius mage like her was slow-witted when it came to things like this. Of course, it was also possible that she understood, but was merely pretending that she didn’t. But it didn’t matter which one it was since I was bored anyway.

“It really depends on the person. I just think that doing this will be more comfortable,” I said.

“I see…”

“Humans aren’t animals that can do things perfectly. No matter how hard Lee Seol-Ho tries to describe the situation that day…” I started.

“Yes?”

“I’m sure there will be some false information. It happened three days ago, so how could he remember every single detail? It doesn’t matter if Joo Seung-Joon really died of natural causes. I’m sure that there will be something that won’t add up so it’ll

be more comfortable if we use that against him. On the other hand, it'll be the same if we think that our guild master was murdered. All the reports about that day are going to be false anyway," I explained.

"Oh, I think I understand. T-Then having proper proof…"

"Having proof isn't what's important," I said, cutting her off.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

"What's more important is whether our suspicion of them is reasonable," I told her.

"…"

"As long as we strongly believe that that's what happened, we can make the evidence anytime. If the majority believes that it's true, then that's the truth," I said.

I thought that maybe I said too much to the *innocent* Jung Ha-Yan, but that regret only lasted for a moment. Jung Ha-Yan nodded as if she had realized something and that was when I discovered that our conversation just now was a mistake. It was because I was getting worried that the cautious Jung Ha-Yan was going to grow even more.

'I hope she won't evolve.'

I was certain that wasn't going to happen.

CHAPTER 102
OLD FORCES (3)

"If the majority believes that it's true… then that's the truth," Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

'Stop mumbling… '

Even while walking, she mumbled as if she was trying to memorize it. I was already worried about what she was going to do, but I thought that nothing big was going to happen. I was certain of it because I was sure that she still remembered the things that happened at the dungeon. The only thing she would do was discreetly tell people that we were dating. She seemed like she didn't know where I was currently heading, but she seemed happy because it felt like we were on a date, but the farther we walked, the more serious her expression became. I didn't remember her having that kind of expression when we ate outside. The way she quietly pulled my sleeve and tried to walk slower made it obvious that she wasn't able to control herself in this situation. It became painfully obvious from the way she tightened her grip around my sleeve. After passing the plaza and the shops, we saw a large guild house.

'The Black Swan.'

The Black Swan Guild was one of the largest guilds that represented the Free City of Lindel.

"*Oh…*"

She immediately looked sad, so I had no choice but to explain while patting her head.

"There's something I need to do."

"Okay…"

"We can go on a date later. You understand that I'm busy right now, right?" I asked.

"I do, Oppa," she answered.

I guess Jung Ha-Yan was happy about the fact that I didn't come here discreetly. Naturally, I couldn't let her follow me when I talked with Lee Ji-Hye, but I knew for sure that she felt comforted mentally by the fact that we were in the same building.

'I think this is my first time here.'

Even though I encountered the Black Swan Guild many times, this was my first time entering their guild. When I took a few steps, the door opened.

'Magic?'

I was certain of it. I guess the size of the guild wasn't the only thing that was better than the Blue Guild. I heard voices before I had the chance to look around.

"Thank you for coming to the guild, Mr. Lee Ki-Young and… Miss Jung Ha-Yan."

"Oh, thank you."

"I'll lead you inside the guild. Is this your first time visiting the guild?"

"Yes, it is."

"We'll head to the living room."

When I lightly nodded, I immediately saw people moving around busily. The guide that was leading us with her quiet voice looked very calm, but it was obvious that she was feeling anxious. Not only were there people greeting us whenever we passed by, but the guide kept looking at us to see if we were feeling uncomfortable, which was a treatment that we never received at the Blue Guild.

'Huh.'

I had an idea as to why they were treating us so kindly like this and it actually felt good.

"Have you eaten?"

"Yes, we ate on our way here," I answered.

"Then I'll prepare some tea for you. If you feel uncomfortable about anything…"

“I’ll let you know right away. By the way, is Miss Ji-Hye inside?” I asked.

“Yes, she’s been waiting inside. May I guide Miss Jung Ha-Yan to a different room?” the guide asked.

“Yes, I would appreciate it,” I answered.

“This way, Miss Jung Ha-Yan…”

“Okay, thank you.”

Jung Ha-Yan looked dumbfounded. She looked at me desperately, but that only lasted for a moment because once she realized that she was heading to the next room, her face brightened up. When the guide bowed and opened the door, I saw Lee Ji-Hye waiting while wearing neat clothes. As soon as she saw me, she started talking.

“I’m surprised that she didn’t come in with you. *Geez,* I didn’t think that you’d bring Miss Ha-Yan with you… you really don’t know how a woman feels.”

“It’s because I have my own problems to deal with. By the way, I guess you already knew that she was coming,” I said.

“I did. I received many reports and told the guild that you would be visiting once the situation at the Blue Guild was settled. By the way… how about joining the Black Swan Guild?” she asked.

“Sorry, but I don’t plan on doing that,” I answered.

“I knew you were going to say that.”

When I looked at her for an explanation, she continued talking. “The guild became a mess when they received a report saying that you and that woman, Jung Ha-Yan, were coming here since the Blue Guild is on the verge of destruction… it wouldn’t be strange if you decided to transfer to another guild. The guild got excited since you and I knew each other and if you think about it, it’s not totally unreasonable for you to join the Black Swan Guild. You saw how tense the guide was, right?” she asked.

“I honestly never thought that I would receive this kind of treatment,” I answered.

“You two are worthy of this kind of treatment. One person is a genius that has the

potential to become the greatest mage and the other is not only skilled in politics and alchemy, but he also possesses a legendary ranked item," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

'What a mess.'

I knew that the Blue Guild was in a mess, but I didn't think that it was this bad. The fact that Lee Ji-Hye already knew about the fact that I had Juliena meant that one of the Blue Guild's members had shared the information with the Black Swan Guild. Even if the Blue Guild was on the verge of collapse, I never knew that its security was this bad.

'Shit.'

"Don't make that kind of face, Oppa. You just have to be careful next time. I thought that you would at least think about transferring to another guild… but I guess it's because of Mr. Hyun-Sung that you have decided to remain at the Blue Guild," she said.

"Half of it is true," I told her.

"Oppa."

"What?"

"I'm going to ask you a serious question," she said.

"Okay."

"Should I add Kim Hyun-Sung to the list of rivals?" she asked.

"…"

"If my assumption is correct, then you should've told me sooner. Even if you're my type, I don't have the confidence to change one's gender identity," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"I'm joking."

"That's good cause I was honestly going to leave just now," I said.

“I just made a joke because the atmosphere seemed tense. If you’re not here to transfer, then there’s only one reason why you came here,” she said.

“You’re right,” I answered.

“I’m sure you’ll be satisfied. Here are the documents… you can look over them carefully when you return to the guild. Basically, there’s something fishy going on. I thought that Lee Seol-Ho was merely acting out without knowing his place, but I’m now certain that he has a connection somewhere else,” she explained.

“Where?” I asked.

“Japan,” she answered.

“I never expected this to happen,” I commented.

“It’s a large guild called Yamato and they’re located in the Free City of Celia to be exact. It seemed like they knew each other for a long time and after the rescue party left Lindel, they made contact a few times. Unfortunately, what we could only confirm was their third contact since we couldn’t check all of them. We don’t know the details, but… we did find something, so you can decide after reading the report since it’s up to our Oppa to make the decision,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

I had a feeling this would happen. People like Lee Seol-Ho never made their moves unless they had support. Since they had already prepared an escape route, they caused all these problems and now, I understood why he was adamant against joining the rescue party.

“It’s obvious what’s going on. The Yamato Guild is trying to expand their influence to Lindel by pretending that they’re protecting the Blue Guild that’s falling apart and can’t act on their own or they’re trying to provide financial aid. I’m sure that old fool has been receiving a lot of nice things from them…” I said.

“You’re probably right. He did have a few exchanges with Celia, but I’m sure that it’s more comfortable to settle down here,” she said.

The situation wasn’t that serious because the Free City of Celia and Lindel were alliances. They were cities that the Benigoa Holy Empire was managing and considering the decline in power, Benigoa wasn’t happy about the fight between Lindel and Celia. They would sometimes have arguments, but they weren’t on bad

terms to the extent that they would rip each other apart. The trade system with Celia was actually very active right now so when putting that into consideration, they probably weren't planning anything grandiose like an invasion. But this information was useful. Even if it was a simple partnership, aid, or even protection, depending on what Lee Seol-Ho said, I could turn the situation into an even more serious one.

"I thought that it happened within Lindel…" I said.

"Me too, but it's bigger than I thought. He's very greedy and while we're on the subject, the way he looks at us is really creepy. It feels like a bug is crawling up my skin. When I called him Oppa, you have no idea how much he liked it…" she explained.

"Sounds like you went through a lot," I told her.

"That's not all that I had to put up with. I had to act all cute in front of him and then find out what he was up to behind his back… if you didn't ask me to do it, then I seriously wouldn't have done something dirty like that," Lee Ji-Hye complained.

I knew just how hard she worked and just by looking at the thick report I was holding, it became obvious. The report was filled with a lot of information and not only did it include Lee Seol-Ho's information, but it also included the other gramps' information and even their daily routine.

If the Blue Guild had a member like Lee Ji-Hye, then I was certain that we wouldn't be in this kind of situation. We were in a relationship where we were using each other, but of course I was thankful for it. When I slowly started talking after our eyes met, I noticed her blushing, which wasn't like her.

"Thanks, noona."

"…"

It also wasn't like her to quickly change the subject.

"It was nothing. Also, there was a problem with forming the support party. The Black Swan Guild received the request for support two days after the expedition party left and that's when it was officially formed. The Blue Guild were the ones that kept saying that they needed more time to prepare. I'm sure that they had their reasons, but I'm sure that they weren't doing their best," she explained.

"*Hmm…*"

"They walked around the plaza a lot. I would've shaken my head if I were asked whether their actions were beneficial or not, but it seemed like they were doing something. If something really did come up that they had to delay the creation of the support party, then I'm confident that they've reached their limits in being incompetent," she added.

"Information regarding that is written here, right?" I asked.

"Of course."

"What do you think about the guild master situation?" I asked.

"*Ah,* so you're thinking that he was murdered as well," she nodded.

"It's only natural for me to think that way," I replied.

"Who knows?"

"*Hm*, you weren't able to find anything?" I asked her.

"How could I? I'm an outsider, you know. I did try and… he was clean," she answered.

"*Hm…*"

"He was very clean. Based on the people that entered the Blue Guild that day and Lee Seol-Ho tracks, there wasn't anything unusual. It's to the point that maybe you should consider the possibility that he really died from natural causes. I heard that the guild master's death was approaching anyway, so it's not strange for him to die… the timing of it does seem suspicious, but you should leave that possibility open," she explained.

"*Ugh*."

My head started to hurt a bit at the possibility that the guild master really died of natural causes. No matter what it was, I still had to create an issue. Of course, it would be a little bit easier if I made the assumption that Lee Seol-Ho actually killed the guild master. The information I received so far was more than enough for me to bring Lee Seol-Ho down, but I needed a more conclusive blow.

'That blow was the guild master... '

It was unfortunate, but I could make proof whenever I wanted. When I glanced at Lee Ji-Hye, I noticed her smiling quietly. When she looked at me as if she wanted me to compliment her, I immediately realized what kind of arrangement Lee Ji-Hye had made. Before I could talk, she spoke first. "What's this?"

She was holding a small potion.

"I had trouble obtaining this potion. It's not poison. It's more like a tranquilizer. It's a bit complex so I don't know all the details, but I heard that it can be pretty lethal for some patients," she said.

"Do you mind if I check?" I asked her.

"Oh right, you're a specialist."

After getting the potion from Lee Ji-Hye, I looked at it and realized that what she said was true.

"*Pffft.*"

"I applied a little bit of it on the clothes that Lee Seol-Ho wears every day. How about using this as proof? This was all I could prepare since I didn't have time…"

"No, this is more than enough, noona," I said, cutting her off.

"That's a relief, Oppa."

I couldn't understand how she knew me so well. It seemed like she knew everything that I was thinking, which gave me goosebumps.

'She's really competent.'

I finally understood why the system kept saying that we were a match made in heaven.

CHAPTER 103
OLD FORCES (4)

I felt like it wasn't enough to say that Lee Ji-Hye and I worked well together. If I were to exaggerate a bit, it felt like she was reading my mind.

'Does she have a unique ability?'

I quietly looked at her status window, but that didn't seem like the case. Our way of thinking was just similar. If people like her were an ally, then she would be really helpful, but if she was an enemy, then things could get complicated. Naturally, I thought about how advantageous it would be to slowly bring her into my party, but when I changed my expression a little bit, she immediately reacted.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"It's because I'm thankful. I honestly wasn't expecting this much… you did better than I thought," I answered.

"This was the first task you gave me, so of course, I need to do my best since I've gained some things thanks to you. It's only natural. Stop looking at me so creepily. I think I know what you're thinking," she said.

"…"

"If you really want to pay me back, why not stay for some ramen?' she asked.

I couldn't do that.

"Sorry, but I have things I need to do, but let me know if you need help with something else," I said, rejecting her offer.

"I don't have anything other than that. Just make sure you get the job done," she said.

"Of course."

“You remember what I said last time, right? Oppa?” she asked.

“Yeah.”

“It’ll be best if you return now. I’m sure your Ha-Yan is worried,” she suggested.

“Okay, thanks again,” I told her.

When I opened the door, I saw Jung Ha-Yan waiting for me just like last time. Next to her was a guide of the Black Swan Guild and they looked anxious for some reason. I guess Jung Ha-Yan still felt on edge even though she was right next door. I actually wanted to compliment her for not breaking the door down. I noticed that her self-control had increased a little bit. Feeling like I was watching a child grow up, I proudly patted her hair. She smiled brightly at me in response.

“Oh my, Miss Ha-Yan,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Oh… hello… Miss Ji-Ji-Hye,” Jung Ha-Yan greeted.

“You’ve become prettier compared to the last time I saw you. I’m glad you returned from the dungeon safely,” she said.

“Huh? *Oh,* thank you…” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Ki-Young oppa must be happy to have such a pretty girlfriend,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“*Oh…* th-thank you, Miss Ji-Hye.”

I felt Lee Ji-Hye patting my shoulder. I felt weird by how casually she was acting as if she was dusting off my clothes. It felt like she was trying to show off my relationship with her, but the fact that she wasn’t overstepping her boundaries was even more amazing.

“You two should stay for dinner. Our guild master actually wanted to meet you two,” Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“Not right now, but we’ll make time later,” I told her.

“I knew you were going to say that. You promised, okay? You and Miss Ha-Yan,” she said.

The way Lee Ji-Hye naturally spoke to both me and Jung Ha-Yan made me realize once again that she wasn't an ordinary woman. Just as I was thinking that there wasn't a woman alive, not even Jung Ha-Yan, that could deal with her, I immediately heard Lee Ji-Hye's voice.

"I'll visit your guild next time, Oppa. The three of us should eat together," she suggested.

"*Oh,* okay," Jung Ha-Yan answered quietly.

"Yeah, let's make time for that. I'll see you later, Ji-Hye," I said.

I thought that she had somewhat improved, but I guess Ha-Yan couldn't help but feel jealous.

After smiling at the waving Lee Ji-Hye, the guide led us outside after we exited the room. When the other members of the guild also saw us out, I realized just how much they care about us.

'It's understandable.'

Just like Lee Ji-Hye said, it wouldn't be strange for us to transfer guilds. If Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't thinking about building his own guild, I would've transferred to the Black Swan Guild because right now, the Blue Guild had no merit.

The sun was still up when we left the Blue Guild, but it was already night and the city looked pretty quaint when we exited the Black Swan Guild. Jung Ha-Yan, who was holding my hand, must have felt the same way because her face turned red. Lindel looked a bit pretty as the sun set, so I was sure that she thought that this was a perfect atmosphere. I also felt the same way. Even though Jung Ha-Yan was always the same, she looked rather beautiful right now for some reason.

'It's because of the atmosphere.'

As we walked while having various conversations…

Buuuzzz-

'What the… '

Juliena started buzzing out of the blue. I was surprised, but before I could look around, I noticed Jung Ha-Yan quietly looking at me. Her mouth was moving, but she wasn't talking to me. I immediately realized what she was doing because a small amount of mana started moving around her.

"A spell?"

There wasn't a reason to recite a spell in the middle of the city. Like the time when she was influenced by the curse at the Cursed Shrine, I thought that maybe she was having extreme thoughts, but I immediately realized that it wasn't the case.

'Sh… '

That was when I heard a loud roar.

Booom!

"Wind of Protection!"

I heard Jung Ha-Yan's voice at the same time. I was able to dodge thanks to the barrier that Jung Ha-Yan had activated, but the inner city shook due to the explosion. I managed to suppress my scream.

"Shit!"

"Oppa! Th-This way! Windy Steps!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

Naturally, we ran through the smoke from the explosion. I immediately heard screaming everywhere. We weren't the only ones affected by the explosion.

"*Ahhhhhh!*"

"*Ack!*"

"Save… Save me!"

A few people were caught in the explosion, but we couldn't help them. The desperation on Jung Ha-Yan's face as she ran while grabbing my arm showed me just how dangerous the situation was. It would be strange if I still hadn't caught on to what was happening. Someone was targeting us.

'Why?'

The sudden terrorism happened because of me and Jung Ha-Yan. It was chaotic, but I didn't stop thinking and naturally, it didn't take me long to figure out who it was. I already knew the culprits that would do something like this.

'Inside the city? They're insane.'

There was only one person in Lindel that would target me.

The crazy gramp Lee Seol-Ho.

'I got lazy.'

I never imagined that he would do something crazy like this inside the city. I thought the old gramp was at least reasonable, but thinking that way had been a mistake. I guess that he didn't really have the ability to think about the consequences.

'Is he insane?'

A person with common sense wouldn't be able to do something like this.

'I'm sure that he himself won't be coming.'

The people that were targeting both me and Jung Ha-Yan were probably Lee Seol-Ho's followers or members of the Yamato Guild. Anyway, we were in danger and before I could organize my thoughts, Jung Ha-Yan grabbed my hand and ran forward.

"Ha-Yan, this way is…"

"Th-There was someone else there. I wasn't sure who it was," she said, cutting me off.

'There's a lot more.'

Our opponent was moving systematically. I didn't hear an explosion after the first one, but I felt magic heading toward us.

"Wind of Protection!" Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

The arrow that was flying toward us was blocked by her shield. Jung Ha-Yan turned

again after running in a straight line because she realized that there were people targeting us there. It felt like they were driving us into a specific place, so I couldn't help but bite my lips out of anxiety.

'Shit.'

Jung Ha-Yan blocked the ranged attacks that were coming toward us, but there was a limit to her protection. No matter how fast she cast her spells, she couldn't block every attack that was coming toward us. I was also reciting a spell, but the harsh reality was that I could only recite ordinary protection spells. In addition, I didn't know where the enemies were.

"We just need to endure it," I said.

"What?" she asked.

"Whether it's the Blue Guild or Lee Ji-Hye, I'm sure that they're going to come to us. It's happening inside the city and they must have heard the explosion too, so they'll definitely come this way," I explained.

"*Oh,* okay! We just need to hold on until then," she said.

'I'm not sure whether we'll be able to hold on or not though.'

"Juliena."

The sword I was holding floated and then I heard the scream that I was waiting for.

"*Ahhhh!*"

Juliena had pierced into the archer that was targeting us. Jung Ha-Yan once again blocked the magic that was heading toward us. I heard swords clashing and heard another explosion after not hearing it for a while. I wasn't sure how many people Juliena was fighting, but we were in a bad situation. I didn't know how many of them were around, where the attacks were coming from, and where the enemies were located. But I knew for sure that the people that were closing in on this place were trained assassins and not some ordinary fighters.

'Shit.'

Boom!

While running frantically, a long spear broke through a wall.

“Juliena!”

Crack!

The sword that was falling from the sky struck down on the spear that was flying toward me. I didn’t have time to watch.

‘We’ll die if we stop.’

“Those crazy bastards…”

“I-I’ll protect you, Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Don’t overdo it,” I told her.

Losing my life or Jung Ha-Yan’s life in a ridiculous situation like this didn’t make sense. Even if I got hurt, saving Jung Ha-Yan was the right thing to do. The worst part of this was that I was running out of breath. This was the first time that I resented the fact that I had low stamina.

“Oppa!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

I heard Jung Ha-Yan’s voice when I kept running instead of stopping, so when I turned around, I noticed a sword coming toward us.

“Juliena…”

Before Juliena came back to us, I noticed Jung Ha-Yan biting her lips. I wasn’t sure why, but I felt like time was moving slower and when her small hand pushed me, my body naturally started falling. When I fell to the ground, I saw a sword in Jung Ha-Yan’s chest as she wrapped herself around me. I couldn’t help but curse when I saw the unrealistic sight.

“Shit, shit. Juliena! Juliena!”

“My name…”

“Juliena! Shit! Juliena!”

“Please say my name, Oppa…” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Ha-Yan. Ha-Yan. Jung Ha-Yan!”

“Stay like… this…” she said.

I heard another stabbing sound and saw Jung Ha-Yan’s abdomen get stabbed by a sword. She was trying to block the attacks while hugging me.

“Protection! Protection!” I yelled.

The protection magic that was embedded in the ring activated, but it broke. During all of this, Jung Ha-Yan kept reciting a spell as her body flinched.

“Shit… Shit! Move away!”

“I don’t want to…” she said.

“Move! You idiot!” I yelled.

“You… hate me,” she stuttered.

‘Die.’

My mind went blank at the thought that Jung Ha-Yan was going to die. I tried to push her away, but she stuck to me like glue and I became even more anxious because she refused to leave my side.

“Wind of Protection…” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Forget about protection and move! Shit!” I yelled.

‘Die.’

‘You’re really going to die.’

“Go away!” I yelled again.

‘Die.’

Jung Ha-Yan was dying. I kept pushing her away while biting my lips, but it wasn’t enough and her blood kept dripping onto my body.

“Shit! Shit! Move! You idiot!” I screamed.

That was when I heard a loud roar.

Booooooom!!!

What I heard after was a familiar voice.

“How ridiculous. It’s really absurd. I guess there are a lot of bastards that consider me a pushover.”

“…”

“You dare point your sword at the Mercenary Queen’s lover?”

She was a woman with red hair.

CHAPTER 104
OLD FORCES (5)

"How ridiculous. It's really absurd. I guess there are a lot of bastards in Lindel that consider me a pushover."

She was a woman with red hair.

'Cha Hee-Ra.'

"Cha…"

"How dare they look down on me. Those bastards," Cha Hee-Ra said.

She was wearing a simple outfit for someone that came to fight the enemy. She looked as if she only came out for a stroll. On top of that, she wasn't wielding a weapon, but despite her casual outfit, she didn't look threatening. Just looking at her made me tremble. Her bloodshot eyes showed just how angry she was. Obviously, she wasn't mad at the fact that I was getting attacked. It seemed like she was mad about the fact that they were going against her authority. All of a sudden, unknown people dropped from the sky and pointed their swords at her.

"Look out!"

Before I could say that, Cha Hee-Ra had kicked her foot into the air.

Craaaack!

Booooom!

'What the… '

I only had a moment to think about how that the sound wasn't one a person could make merely by kicking before my mouth dropped open at the sight that was difficult to comprehend. The bodies of the people that came down with their swords blew up. Their entire body disappeared just like that.

'With just a kick… '

I probably shouldn't be saying this to someone that was saving me, but I couldn't help but think that she was a monster. Naturally, I felt relieved by the current situation. I never knew the insurance that I had would save my life like this.

My attention on Cha Hee-Ra only lasted for a moment as I looked at Jung Ha-Yan again who was still crouching her body in order to protect me.

'Is Ha-Yan… breathing?'

It only took a moment for me to check her condition.

'She's still alive.'

Her heartbeat was slow, but it was still beating. Naturally, I thought that I should look into her more. I tried my best to push away Jung Ha-Yan, who was almost unconscious, but it was useless. She was basically stuck to me like glue. As I struggled in picking her up and then laying her down, I noticed injuries on her that I hadn't seen before. Getting stabbed by the sword wasn't the issue. Considering the arrows that were on her back and the injuries caused by magic, it was a miracle that she was still alive.

'Shit… '

She was in pain and despite that, she continuously protected me. I was thankful to her.

"You idiot…"

'What should I do?'

I couldn't head to the shrine to get a priest's help.

'She'll die before I get there.'

I thought that it would be best to give her all the first aid treatment that I could for now. First was the Ring of Healing that Jung Ha-Yan was wearing. When I reached my hand out to grab it, Jung Ha-Yan must have instinctively rejected it because her small hand formed a tight fist.

'Even in this situation… '

It was a relief that she was still conscious. It didn't take long for me to open her hand and place it in mine. After inserting my mana into the ring, I recited a spell and then saw a white light enveloping Jung Ha-Yan.

"Cure."

"…"

Even though it was a lower grade cure, I thought that it would help improve her condition.

'Next is… '

The potion I was carrying. I didn't have a lot of it, but it was a good quality potion. After I removed the cap using my mouth, I poured it on her wounds and immediately poured some into my mouth. When I grabbed her chin to help deliver the potion into her mouth, I noticed her hand flinching.

'It's effective.'

But her condition was still bad.

It was ridiculous how I was able to feel Jung Ha-Yan's tongue slowly move in my mouth.

'She's alive.'

She was definitely alive. I wasn't sure why she was moving her tongue, but naturally, my anxiety went away. When I removed my mouth, her breathing seemed to have calmed down. My vision became blurry. I thought that I was not easily frightened, but for some reason, I couldn't stop myself from crying. I wasn't crying like a child, but tears were falling, my hands and feet were shaking at the thought that she could have died and my breathing became unstable as well.

When I looked around after wiping my tears, I was able to see the situation more clearly. Cha Hee-Ra was fighting with the assassins. Actually, it couldn't be considered a fight. Her actions looked as if she wasn't in her right mind because the majority of the assassins' limbs had either been ripped off or had been blown up. Of

course, there were a few skilled assassins that were still fighting Cha Hee-Ra, but the fact that they were on the defensive side was undeniable. She had the advantage.

I was certain that the other guilds in Lindel were going to come to our help soon. When I was feeling a bit relieved, I noticed an assassin walking through the dust while wielding a sword. I flinched but I didn't bother running away because I knew that his head was going to get severed before he could even use his sword. As I heard the wind blowing, I heard his head falling off his body.

"Sorry for being late." It was Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung, Ha-Yan is…" I said.

"Miss Hee-Young is here as well," he said.

"Oh…"

Just like Kim Hyun-Sung said, I saw Sun Hee-Young approaching us while hiding behind Park Deok-Gu who was looking around with his shield up. Not only that, but I was certain the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild were also nearby. It was a short moment, but we started to deal with the unexpected situation.

"Noo-Noonim…" Park Deok-Gu said.

As soon as he reached us, Park Deok-Gu started crying while touching Jung Ha-Yan's face and Sun Hee-Young continued to let her holy magic flow into Jung Ha-Yan. I felt a bit relieved because she wasn't just using high-ranked magic but looked like she was giving professional medical treatment.

"How's Miss Ha-Yan's condition?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"She could've died if we were a little late. If Mr. Ki-Young didn't administer first aid, then I don't think…" Sun Hee-Young answered.

'That's a relief."

"…"

"Who was it?"

"I'm not sure yet. Ha-Yan and I were on our way back from the Black Swan Guild when we suddenly heard a loud explosion and I was able to confirm that the assassins were targeting us. During all of this, Miss Cha Hee-Ra helped us," I answered.

"I see," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked around with cold eyes. His eyes were so cold that I felt a shiver down my back. It was the strongest emotion I had ever seen from him. I thought about the possibility that he might have experienced something similar in his past life, but I couldn't help but remain quiet. One thing I was certain of was…

'All of you are dead, you bastards.'

The people that attacked me and Jung Ha-Yan had no chance. They wouldn't be able to protect their own lives, much less win. Obviously, the situation in this war was changing. Actually, it couldn't even be considered a war because the large group of assassins we couldn't determine the numbers of were basically targeting me. Cha Hee-Ra was basically ripping apart the assassins with her hands and the members from the Red Mercenary Guild that arrived were surrounding the area and closing in. It didn't take long for the assassins to start running away.

"Don't let a single rat escape from this place," Cha Hee-Ra ordered.

"Yes, Master."

As soon as I heard Cha Hee-Ra's voice, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung running to the nearest assassin that was running away.

The situation was coming to an end. At least there weren't any more assassins nearby. I guess Cha Hee-Ra must have noticed that too because she slowly walked toward me along with the executives of her guild. She was obviously annoyed and even the executives of her guild were walking on eggshells.

"*Ugh*… I should've let some of them live," she said.

"All of them would've died anyway because they all carried poison. Those who lost their limbs or were injured had already ended their own lives."

"I see… I'm not sure if I should feel relieved by that… I should fix this habit of mine

though. Did you figure out who it was?" she asked.

"We're currently looking into it. We asked the Black Swan Guild for help as well…"

"Since that's their specialty, leave out a few and hand the rest of them over. I'm sure they'll get better results than us torturing them all day," she ordered them.

"Okay."

"Don't forget to clean up and as I've mentioned before, if I hear that one of those rats escaped Lindel, all of you will die by my hands," Cha Hee-Ra warned them.

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Before you do that…"

"I'm sorry."

"You know what you did wrong, right?" she asked.

"I'm sorry."

"I never imagined that I would see my darling get attacked with my own eyes," she said.

"…"

"On top of that, it's in Lindel… I guess your life in the guild has been comfortable these days. Right? Or do you see me as a fool like those assassins did? Have you become careless just because we recently came back from an expedition?" she asked.

"Th-That's…"

"You should know by now that I don't need idiots that just follow orders."

"Yes, Ma'am…"

"I won't say it again. If I see this kind of situation again… it'll be your funeral," Cha Hee-Ra warned them.

“We’ll keep that in mind.”

“Okay, great,” she nodded.

I felt embarrassed the more I heard their conversation because the man that was getting scolded by Cha Hee-Ra looked fired up as he looked at me. He looked like he resented me, but at the same time, he looked determined.

The other guild members around him had their heads down as well as they were getting scolded, making me feel a bit embarrassed.

The way Cha Hee-Ra walked toward me while wiping the blood off of her body with a handkerchief made her look more like a devil than a hero. Unknown red lumps were all over her body and she was taking them off as if they weren’t a big deal.

Before I could say anything, Cha Hee-Ra spoke first with the corner of her lips raised.

“Are you okay, honey?”

I thought for a moment whether I should talk formally or casually. In the end, I decided that talking casually would be a bit better.

“Thanks, Hee-Ra noona.”

She patted my head as if I was some kind of cute doll and then hugged me tightly. The smell of blood immediately filled my nose.

“This is the least I can do when my honey got hurt. I guess more people resent you than you thought. Wait, we shouldn’t stay here. I’d like to head inside there and talk…” Cha Hee-Ra requested.

“*Oh…*”

“Hyung-Jin!” she yelled.

“Yes, Master.”

“Place the guild members on standby 50 meters around this collapsing building. Also… take my darling’s girlfriend back to the guild and treat her. Make sure that there wouldn’t be any scars on her body. A woman’s body is precious,” Cha Hee-Ra

ordered.

Despite knowing that, she had fought aggressively just now.

When I glanced over at Jung Ha-Yan, I noticed her sleeping quietly while Sun Hee-Young continued to take care of her. I honestly wanted to keep an eye on her condition, but staying here with Cha Hee-Ra was the right thing to do.

“Miss Hee-Young.”

“Don’t worry. She’s stable right now. It’ll take a while until she regains her consciousness, but I’ll take care of her physical recovery,” Sun Hee-Young said.

“There you go… let’s head in, darling. There are a lot of people watching and as your legal wife, it hurts my pride when you’re so focused on your girlfriend. I understand that she’s injured, but… you should know that I’m a really jealous person,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“Oh, right. I’m sorry, noona,” I said.

We headed in toward the collapsing building and as soon as we entered, Cha Hee-Ra started talking. “I was hoping you’d tell me what’s been going on with you, darling…”

“It’ll take a long time to explain everything,” I told her.

“You can talk casually,” she said.

“If that’s what you want, Hee-Ra noona.”

“Anyway, you did well. I never imagined that there would be a guy crazy enough to do something like this within the city, especially while I’m around. I may look fine on the outside, but it kind of hurt my pride. You understand what I mean, right?” she asked.

“Of course.”

“It’s a bit extreme to say that this happened all because of the new legendary-ranked item you obtained recently… they should already know that an item that chooses their owner can’t be used even if they kill the owner. I want to know exactly who caused this and where they are…” she said.

It only took a moment for me to think about whether to tell her the truth. If I told her about Lee Seol-Ho, then he might disappear without anyone knowing, however…

'That's too easy.'

It would be such an easy death for an annoying old man.

She wasn't the only one that was angry. Even I couldn't make a reasonable decision and despite knowing that I needed to be more cool-headed during a situation like this, it wasn't easy to control my emotions.

I didn't want to hand Lee Seol-Ho over to Cha Hee-Ra and that was my true feeling, however…

'I can't lie.'

I thought that lying would be the worst decision.

"I'm not sure yet, but Lee Seol-Ho from the Blue Guild."

"*Ohhh,* Lee Seol-Ho… so it's Lee Seol-Ho," she mumbled.

"We kind of annoyed him a bit. You already heard the news that our guild master died, right noona?" I asked her.

"That was the first news I heard as soon as I returned to the city," she answered.

"I'm not sure yet, but I have proof that the old man killed our guild master. Besides that, he's involved in a lot of things, but I don't want to explain all of it. I'd like to make an additional request. Please don't touch Lee Seol-Ho," I told her.

"…"

I noticed her frowning.

"Honey."

"Yes."

"You should know that you're not in the position to make requests. Even though I'm

staying quiet, you should know that I'm a little bit angry right now. My anger probably won't go away until you bring that bastard here this instant," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"…"

"I'll be honest. I like you. Even if we spent all day getting to know each other, I probably wouldn't be bored. But you know, even you shouldn't try to hurt my pride. I can understand your feelings and I know that you want to pay him back for what he did to you. But if I hand over that old man to you, then where should I go to vent my anger on, *huh?*" she asked.

I expected her to say something like that. I couldn't help but answer after making eye contact with her again.

"Yamato Guild."

I saw her smiling.

"You're a piece of trash that I really like," she complimented.

CHAPTER 105
INSTIGATION AND FABRICATION (1)

“You’re a piece of trash that I really like,” Cha Hee-Ra complimented me.

“…”

She was still smiling.

“I guess Lee Seol-Ho and the Yamato Guild are connected somehow. I did think that there was something strange, but this is turning into a fun situation,” she said.

“I’m not certain enough that we can do something about it, noona, but it’s a possibility. Even if that old man wanted to kill me, do you think that the guilds and groups within Lindel will be able to look down on you?” I asked.

“My cute darling, are you trying to flatter me?” she asked.

I was trying to flatter her.

“Somewhat…” I answered.

“I like your honesty. Keep going,” she said.

“There isn’t a person in Lindel who isn’t afraid of you, so it’s right to assume that the crazy outsiders were the ones that pulled the trigger. We can assume that they’re forming a force where they don’t have to think about the consequences even after getting caught, so I just picked the side that was most likely to pull something like this,” I explained.

“I understand. Yamato… now that I think about it, that bitch is the guild master of that guild,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“Have you met her before?” I asked.

“Masters of large guilds gather at least once regularly and it’s hosted by the holy

empire. I ran into her a few times… but since you said all that, I guess I can be a bit patient. You do know that fighting between guilds within the holy empire is forbidden, right? I trust that you'll come up with a way," she said.

"…"

"You can leave now since I know you're busy. My guild members will escort you back," she told me.

"Thank you, Hee-Ra noona."

"The list you sent me last time has been put to good use. *Oh* and about Jung Ha-Yan…"

"I'll leave her at the Red Mercenary Guild for now. Until this is over," I said, interrupting her.

"I thought so, darling. I do want to spend more time with you, but… I don't think we should do that considering how you look right now," she said.

"Yeah."

"I'll see you later. It'd be nice if we met at a more romantic spot next time."

"Let's do that, noona," I told her.

I bowed when I saw Cha Hee-Ra waving her hand and when I walked outside, I noticed people running toward me.

'Red Mercenary Guild.'

Getting scolded by Cha Hee-Ra must have been effective. I never imagined that they would run up to me first. They looked extremely nervous and seemed like they were trying their best not to hurt my feelings, making this situation quite enjoyable. The fact that these puppies were walking on eggshells around me was amusing.

"*Um…* Mr. Ki-Young."

"Yes?"

"We'll escort you back to the guild."

“Thank you,” I said.

There wasn’t a reason for me to reject them. It seemed like they had cleaned up the surroundings perfectly, but there could still be a few more around.

‘Although the possibility is low.’

It was best to be as careful as possible.

Park Deok-Gu, Jung Ha-Yan, and Sun Hee-Young were currently at the Red Mercenary Guild. I didn’t see Kim Hyun-Sung around, so I assumed that he was trying to find out the mastermind behind the attack.

‘He’s a pretty busy person.’

I was certain that he must be doing that even now.

While heading back to the guild, I had various thoughts. What would be the most miserable way to get rid of the old man? Or what would be the best way to kill him? I thought that changing a part of the plan wasn’t a bad idea, but since I wanted to take care of this as quickly as possible, I also thought that adapting to the situation when it happened wouldn’t be a bad idea either.

‘Don’t be swayed.’

If I got too worked up, it would be no different from losing the fight. I thought that the saying *people that smile during hardship were the best people* was bullshit, but for me, raising the corner of my lips was more fitting.

“Here should be fine,” I told them.

“We’ll be on standby not too far from here so that we can immediately come to you in case something happens within the guild,” one of them said.

“There’s no need to… it’s our guild anyway,” I said.

Despite saying that, I didn’t think that they would be too effective. Not only that, but they took something out after searching their pockets.

“And this…”

“What’s this?” I asked.

“We prepared this item so that you can send a rescue signal anytime you’re in trouble,” they explained.

As I glanced at the man in front of me, I noticed that his eyes were filled with passion. I guess they became determined after getting scolded by the Mercenary Queen. When I thought about the possibility that a task force was created just for me, I started to feel a bit flustered.

‘I like that they’re keeping me safe, but… ’

It would be annoying if I got restricted because of it. I think it would be better to talk about this with Cha Hee-Ra later on.

After bowing, I immediately entered the guild and noticed how messy the inside was. I guess everyone had recently returned to the guild after what happened earlier. It was proof that the situation within Lindel had been taken care of.

‘While I was talking with Cha Hee-Ra… ’

They moved quickly. A meeting could open up soon where all the guild masters in Lindel would have to meet. Basically, the terrorism happened because they were targeting me, but the location where it happened was the problem. Finding proof of the culprit that was behind the attack may be difficult, but I was sure that they would discuss how to prevent this next time. The press would also certainly make headlines about the attack and even though I regret not giving them a lot of information, I didn’t need to use the press for now.

When I looked around after entering the guild, I noticed a few members. Kim Ye-Ri was the only member of our party that was here. I guess she felt more comfortable being around me because her face brightened up when she saw me. Lee Sang-Hee, whose eyes were swollen, approached me with a surprised look, and Hwang Jung-Yeon did the same.

“Mr. Ki-Young! Are you hurt anywhere?”

“I’m fine, Miss Lee Sang-Hee,” I answered.

“Th-That’s a relief. Oh… I heard Miss Ha-Yan got hurt…”

“She’s out of danger. I did hear that she’ll experience an aftereffect, but it’s not life-threatening. It was so chaotic that I let the Red Mercenary Guild take care of her. Deok-Du and Miss Hee-Young went with Ha-Yan to keep an eye on her condition. As for Mr. Hyun-Sung, I’m sure he’ll be returning soon,” I explained.

“*Oh…*”

“I think being there will be a lot safer than here,” I said.

It was implied criticism. Even though it wasn’t an offensive remark toward Lee Sang-Hee, she looked depressed. Naturally, Lee Seol-Ho and his lackeys caught my attention more than Lee Sang-Hee. Lee Seol-Ho looked like he was maintaining his composure, but his lackeys looked like they were having a hard time remaining calm because they all looked anxious. The person that they thought was going to die came back alive and by now, they must be regretting their stupid decision. I was certain that some of them thought that it would be okay to feign ignorance, but since I was attacked first, I now had the right to retaliate.

‘Stupid bastards.’

Their incompetency had reached its limits. Even if Lee Seol-Ho and his lackeys were innocent, I couldn’t be in the same guild as them. They would use any means necessary to make the guild theirs.

When I remained quiet, I noticed Lee Seol-Ho talking as if he had been waiting for the right moment.

“Hahaha, what a relief! It’s good that you survived such a terrifying terrorist attack.”

‘Crazy old man.’

He had a talent for annoying people.

“Your body may still be affected by the aftermath of the explosion. How about getting a check-up, Mr. Ki-Young?” he suggested.

“I’m fine,” I said.

“You’ve been through a lot. I can’t believe that you got caught up in an explosion. My heart dropped when I heard that you were surrounded by unknown rioters… I was

really worried. Our guild had already lost a lot of members and to lose new talents like yourself… it would be really heartbreaking," Lee Seol-Ho said.

He didn't sound all that sincere for someone that was truly worried.

"There's been a lot of bad news lately, making this old man feel anxious," he added.

"…"

The way he was trying to fix this situation was a sight to see. It only took a moment for me to decide how I should start the conversation. Just looking at him made me want to curse, so when I started talking, I noticed him biting his lips.

"They weren't ordinary rioters,"

"…"

"I'm sure that all of you will hear about it later. What happened in Lindel wasn't random terrorism. The people that raided the city were well-trained assassins and not ordinary mobs. I'm also certain that they were targeting both me and Ha-Yan," I explained.

"Why…" Lee Sang-Hee suddenly asked.

"Maybe it's because of the legendary-ranked item that Mr. Ki-Young has, Miss Lee Sang-Hee," Lee Seol-Ho said to her.

'Pffft.'

It was a convincing reason because even if the item had already selected its owner, a legendary item was still a worthy item to steal. Still, it would be more convincing to say that all this was the work of greedy bastards if the item hadn't selected its owner yet. However…

"I don't think that's the case."

"*Oh…*"

"The Blue Guild members are the only ones that know about the fact that I obtained a legendary-ranked item and everyone already knows that the sword chose me as its

owner. I have no idea who leaked the information, but I'm sure that people won't target an item that already has an owner, especially when the Mercenary Queen could also become their enemy," I explained.

"Information…"

Lee Sang-Hee seemed really surprised by the possibility that the information that had been shared within the guild was leaked.

'She's a naive woman.'

I wasn't sure what the Blue Guild meant to her, but this guild had been tainted a long time ago.

"I think I was attacked because of my curiosity," I said.

"Excuse me?"

"I'm trying to be careful about saying this, but I have my suspicions about the guild master's death," I told Lee Sang-Hee.

"*Oh…*"

"Of course, I already knew about the fact that we didn't know when the guild master was going to pass away, but despite that, there are a few things I'm suspicious of," I added.

Lee Seol-Ho looked at me as if he was asking me what I was talking about.

'It wasn't you.'

I thought that maybe Lee Seol-Ho really wasn't the culprit. The fact that I was attacked could possibly be due to Lee Seol-Ho's pride or to sell the guild over to the Japanese guild. From the beginning, Lee Seol-Ho believed that we wouldn't be able to clear the Cursed Shrine. If we didn't manage to clear it, the guild master was as good as dead. Now that I thought about it, there really wasn't a reason for him to kill the guild master. Of course, he could have killed him in order to speed things up a little or for personal reasons, but…

'It's becoming more likely that the guild master died of natural causes… '

Under the condition that Lee Seol-Ho wasn't pretending. No matter what the truth was, it didn't matter to me.

The situation was actually getting exciting. From my point of view, I was feeling a bit excited about framing someone.

"I believe that it's possible that he got murdered. When the guild master died, no one was in his room and while we were on our expedition, the people that remained at the guild didn't think of the possibility that he could have been murdered. Actually, it seemed like they were hiding something, to be exact," I said.

"What are you…"

Bullshit.

"I thought about the possibility that an outside enemy could be the one responsible for it, however… there wasn't any internal report about what happened after we left. I think it's right to think that it happened within the guild," I explained.

"…"

"What you're seeing are the results of my investigation. I didn't have enough time, but I was able to gather a few clues and on my way back from work, I was attacked. There must be someone trying to hide the truth," I said.

I was good at talking bullshit.

It was better to approach it with details. I had a lot of proof, physical evidence, and conviction, but I didn't have enough time to piece everything together. I needed time to autopsy the guild master's body and I had to be more meticulous about cornering Lee Seol-Ho.

But the situation had changed a lot. Why? Because I was attacked. That fact alone created a frame that helped me solve the puzzle that I couldn't complete before the attack.

Lee Seol-Ho was obviously suppressing his emotions. When I started talking, he looked as if he had just eaten a pile of shit.

"You know, Miss Lee Sang-Hee. I think there's a disgusting traitor within the Blue

Guild. The culprit that murdered the guild master," I told her.

The truth wasn't what made the world go round.

'It's instigation and fabrication.'

CHAPTER 106
INSTIGATION AND FABRICATION (2)

"You know, Miss Lee Sang-Hee. I think there's a disgusting traitor within the Blue Guild and they're the culprit that killed the guild master," I told her.

When I looked around after I finished talking, there was a strange silence. Lee Sang-Hee had her mouth closed and Hwang Jung-Yeon simply nodded since we had discussed this before. The other members that weren't involved in this looked around while Lee Seol-Ho and the other gramps frowned. Even if they weren't the ones that killed the guild master, I was sure that the words, disgusting traitor, were embedded into their heads.

'Because it's the truth.'

Obviously, there had to be a foundation since this kind of situation couldn't be done with just instigation and fabrication. Fabrication was more than enough to exaggerate the foundation. If I had to give an example, the foundation could be exaggerated, but the truth mixed with lies would be surprisingly convincing.

I wasn't smart nor was I good at talking. But the ability to read someone's nature through Mind's Eyes made me able to deduce their overall personality and how they would act. If I had no idea about the other person's nature, then I wouldn't have been able to write a proper script and the reality was that I had to rely on this ability. If I was an actual genius, then I wouldn't be thinking so much.

As expected, the gramps started to make a fuss.

"I-It's not really the right time to… cause trouble, Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

"I understand what you mean, but rather than talking about this, shouldn't we take care of the situation that's going to take place? Miss Lee Sang-Hee, let's go back and…"

"No, I think it'll be best to hear him out," Lee Sang-Hee said, interrupting Lee Seol-Ho.

"But…"

"I want to hear what he has to say," she told him.

Unfortunately for him, Lee Sang-Hee was on our side. She wasn't an idiot. It was quite possible that she felt something strange from their actions because the support team didn't arrive quickly and he also didn't want to join the expedition. She probably doubted him a few times before, but the thing that shielded them from her suspicion was the relationship that they had built. The relationship that they had built a long time ago caused her suspicion to become stagnant.

'I just need to help her grow her suspicions.'

The only thing I could do for Lee Sang-Hee was to add fuel to the fire.

"The behavior pattern of those with vested interest is simple. Once they think their possessions are going to get taken away, they'll start flailing and do whatever it takes to prevent it and I believe that there are people like that within the Blue Guild." I explained.

I didn't say any names, but I didn't stop looking at them. Even though I didn't say who those people were, I was certain that everyone must have noticed it by now.

'Seol-Ho.'

Provoking someone little by little was much worse than being openly hostile and I was proud of being the best at provoking people.

I noticed Lee Seol-Ho's face turning red as he looked at me.

"Your imagination is a bit too much, haha," Lee Seol-Ho said.

"I'm sure it's very heartbreaking to see a reality that's different from before, Mr. Seol-Ho. You can be considered a hero since you're one of the original members of the glorious Blue Guild and you have contributed a lot to the guild, so I'm sure that the guild's current state can't satisfy you anymore," I said to him.

"…"

"You might've had to make an extreme decision for your future and for the guild. For

example, getting help from another guild… or maybe you're feeling inferior to someone. I understand that you're feeling uneasy since a new member that had just joined the guild successfully made an alliance with a large guild within Lindel," I added.

"What?" Lee Seol-Ho asked.

"Bringing in a large guild from a different city is an idea that only an incompetent old man is able to do, but I applaud you for your effort. I'll give you six points," I said.

When I quietly let my mana flow while mocking him, the reports that I received from Lee Ji-Hye started flying within the guild and it was to the point that I wanted to set up a projector and start a presentation on it. It was a bit uncomfortable, but I was sure that it wasn't difficult to read the information that was written on the paper that was flying around. The fact that Lee Seol-Ho was colluding with the Japanese from the free city of Celia was an issue that had already been confirmed. Even though they only met three times, the dates and times were clearly written on there and this data was the truth.

"How did you…"

"I'm usually a bit skeptical, so I always prepare different things," I told Lee Sang-Hee.

"The information has been fabricated, Miss Lee Sang-Hee," Lee Seol-Ho said.

"Whether it's been fabricated or not, it'll be revealed sooner or later. Mr. Hyun-Sung, the leader of party seven, and the Black Swan Guild have been working hard to find out the identity of those that attacked me," I explained.

"The people that attacked you in the first place have nothing to do with us! Mr. Ki-Young, I completely understand that you're angry, but it doesn't make sense to corner an innocent person by fabricating information like this," Lee Seol-Ho said, angrily.

"I don't know why you keep thinking that this was fabricated, but… are you confident?" I asked him.

"What do you…"

"Are you confident that the information written here is fake? The truth will

eventually come out, you stupid, incompetent bastard. Even if you keep telling us that you didn't meet with the guild from Celia, you would still need to explain what you did during that time." I pointed out.

He wouldn't be able to explain it because he couldn't deny the fact that they actually met with the Yamato Guild. They probably knew the truth better than anyone, so continuously denying it was actually better because that would put us in a more advantageous situation. No matter how hard they would try to hide the facts, the moment we revealed one, the remaining would eventually be revealed. It would make things better for me if it was revealed that Lee Seol-Ho had been lying and honestly, I actually wanted him to deny it a bit more.

That was when Lee Seol-Ho started talking…

"It's true that I met them, Miss Lee Sang-Hee."

'…'

"But I swear to you, I know nothing about the guild master's death and the recent attack," he added.

'Bullshit.'

That was when I also realized that I wasn't the only one that knew how to instigate and fabricate because they were also mixing lies with the truth.

It was true that he had no connection with the guild master's death, but the fact that he said he didn't know anything about the attack was a fabrication. He acknowledged part of it while he denied the other part and I was sure that he was going to mention something obvious like he just wanted to help the guild.

My assumption was correct because I heard Lee Seol-Ho say it, word for word.

"I just wanted to help the guild."

"…"

"We don't know when the Blue Guild will fall, so I had to consider the possibility that you might not return, Miss Lee Sang-Hee. I had no choice but to do that in order to preserve the guild that the guild master had always been protecting. It was all for the

guild," he said.

"Was there a reason why I wasn't informed of this earlier?" Lee Sang-Hee asked.

"I just wanted to help because it's a guild that the guild master and I created. I love the Blue Guild more than anyone, so saying that I killed the guild master is absolutely ridiculous, Miss Lee Sang-Hee," he explained.

"Sh… Shut up," she stuttered.

"Miss Lee Sang-Hee," he said.

"Shut your mouth… Lee Seol-Ho," she told him.

It was a good attempt, but it wasn't effective.

I realized that Lee Seol-Ho was the one that was helping Lee Sang-Hee's suspicion grow, not me. There had been no barrier that was blocking her from being suspicious of him.

Lee Seol-Ho's backup plan wasn't bad, but it was nothing more than a backup plan and it didn't invalidate the fact that he and his lackeys had colluded with a different guild.

"You crazy gramps are smooth talkers… saying that it was for the guild is bullshit. Colluding with another guild behind the person with the most authority in the group is called betrayal, you incompetent fools. I didn't expect you to reveal the fact that you betrayed the guild. I never imagined it," I said.

"Betrayal?! How dare you say such a ridiculous word?! I was just coming up with a plan! Forming a support party within Lindel wasn't easy, so I reached out to a guild outside for their help and you call that betrayal?! You're making the situation even worse," Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

"The bullshit you're spitting out is something I've heard many times. Look, gramps. The people that ruin a country or a group have one thing in common and it's that they always bring in external forces… you guys have no imagination at all. All of you crazy gramps are the ones that are worsening the issues, not us," I explained.

"Of course, I was going to tell you everything, Miss Lee Sang-Hee," Lee Seol-Ho said.

“Considering the fact that you’ve kept it a secret up until now tells me that you were never going to tell me. From the beginning, the Yamato Guild was never going to create a support party to come and help us,” Lee Sang-Hee said.

“We just wanted to make sure that everything was perfect, Miss Lee Sang-Hee,” he said.

“If that’s the case, then you’re just ridiculously incompetent. I don’t understand why you’re so proud of the fact that it took you more than a week to create a support party… *pffft.* You’re also lying to me, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho. The Black Swan Guild has finished their investigation by asking the people in the plaza, and they confirmed that you purposely delayed the creation of the support party,” I told him.

“Bullshit!” Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

“You’re the one saying all this bullshit, you crazy gramps! Isn’t the reason why you really didn’t want to go to the Cursed Shrine was because you were expecting the expedition party to die? Miss Lee Sang-Hee, this disgusting traitor was definitely going to take control of the Blue Guild after hearing the news of our annihilation, so I’m sure that he targeted the guild master as well,” I told her.

“Stop talking nonsense when you don’t know anything! The guild master and I have spent a lot of time together! He was like my little brother and a family to me, so there’s no reason for me to harm Joo Seung-Joon,” Lee Seol-Ho said.

“People usually murder others because of their greed,” I said.

“I’m being framed! I swear to god that I have never harmed the guild master!” Lee Seol-Ho said desperately.

“Oh yeah? If you didn’t harm him, then what’s this, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho?” I asked him.

I took out the potion that I got from Lee Ji-Hye and the people around us started gathering.

“What’s…”

“Your acting is really impressive. Mr. Lee Seol-Ho, you should know better than anyone what this is, right?” I asked him.

When I shook the bottle while mocking him, I noticed his face shaking in anger.

“The reason why you tried to kill me in the first place was because of this, you old man,” I said.

“That’s bullshit… Miss Lee Sang-Hee! I’m being framed! I would never do…”

“What that incompetent man is saying is slander, Miss Lee Sang-Hee. This is the potion that Lee Seol-Ho used to murder the guild master. This potion is a type of tranquilizer that helps the body, but it can be very deadly to some people, so if it’s used on someone that’s dying, the potion will slowly kill them,” I explained.

“I’ve never seen or heard of such a potion! You scum! How dare you try to frame me?!” he yelled at me.

“It’s true that not many people know about this, but this type of potion usually leaves a trail. When you open the lid, the fine particles that float in the air will stick to woolen clothes, so if we analyze Lee Seol-Ho’s clothes for the traces of this chemical, I’m sure that we’ll get the answer right away. Actually, there’s no need to analyze it,” I said.

When I started to recite a spell, the potion I was holding started to glow and as expected, the light was starting to envelop Lee Seol-Ho’s clothes. When I glanced at Hwang Jung-Yeon, I noticed her nodding and it was a sign telling me that my spell wasn’t being manipulated in any way.

“I’m not sure why your clothes have traces of this potion, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho,” I said.

“I-I’m being framed, Miss Lee Sang-Hee! It’s true! I have no connection to the guild master’s death! Why would I do such a thing?!” Lee Seol-Ho yelled desperately.

His shocked reaction was amusing to watch and it wasn’t just Lee Seol-Ho. Even though the gramps beside him weren’t yelling at Lee Sang-Hee, there was no way that she would listen to the words of criminals.

“Framed by ass… you disgusting, incompetent scums. They’re all evil, Miss Lee Sang-Hee. I’m certain that Mr. Joo Seung-Joon experienced a painful death while holding onto his consciousness. I’m sure that he had been very heartbroken by the fact that he was betrayed by the person he trusted…” I said.

“That’s all bullshit! Please, Sang-Hee! Please trust me. Everything that the dirty alchemist has said are lies!” he said to her.

He was now using their relationship and his desperation was quite a sight.

“Since the first day we came here, I always thought of you and Seung-Joon as family. Since I didn’t have a family here, you two were my family, so I would never do something like that. You should know that better than anyone. Everything that the dirty alchemist has said are lies! Jung-Yeon! Please say some… everyone, none of this is true!” Lee Seol-Ho screamed.

“Lies my ass,” I commented.

Lee Seol-Ho’s method was pretty simple. If someone asked me to write a manual on how to use Lee Seol-Ho, then I would write this down. He was incompetent, greedy, and hot-tempered. When I raised the corner of my lips, his face turned even redder.

“The truth will eventually come out,” I told him.

“You bastard…” he said to me.

“Guards, take this crazy old man immediately…”

“How dare you! You were the problem all along! You’re the lump of cancer within the guild!” he yelled at me.

“I don’t think you have the right to call me that since you’re obviously the incompetent one in the guild. No, it’s actually a relief that you’re incompetent because you left a trace of your crimes,” I said to him.

“How dare you frame me like this?! You’re framing me for this when I’ve protected the Blue Guild all my life?! Let go of me! Do all of you really believe what that crazy scum is saying? Let go of me! How dare you!” Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

Watching him break free from the guards was amusing and when I kept grinning, I guess he couldn’t contain his anger anymore because he started to run toward me.

“You dirty bastard! You were the problem all along!” he said again.

I didn’t bother dodging him this time, and it wasn’t because I trusted Juliena. It was

because I trusted Lee Sang-Hee, who was crying. As if she was fulfilling my expectation, Lee Sang-Hee, who was engulfed in sadness and anger, roared. “You’re worse than animals!”

Boom!

Lee Seol-Ho’s arm was severed, and I saw him flying into a wall.

‘Bravo!’

This was the sight I wanted to see.

CHAPTER 107
I'M GOING TO REMEMBER YOU (1)

"*Couuuuugh*!"

"You're worse than animals," Lee Sang-Hee said.

"*Kyahhh*!"

Lee Seol-Ho screamed in pain while holding his severed arm and the guild's guides subconsciously screamed. The blood that splattered in the air was unbelievable and the way Lee Seol-Ho painfully rolled on the floor while holding his arm was quite a sight.

During all of this, Lee Sang-Hee was collecting her breath and she was obviously very angry. It didn't really fit her character, but her reaction was natural since the murderer that killed her family or lover was right in front of her. Even a monk would be angry about it. I was sure that wasn't the only reason she got angry, though. To her, Lee Seol-Ho was someone she wanted to trust, and she had too much faith in him. I was sure that there were a few things that made her suspicious of him but despite that, she had held all that in and it showed what she thought about Lee Seol-Ho.

"*Ha… ha… ha…*"

"*Ahhh*! I… didn't kill him. It wasn't me! Sang-Hee… please believe me. You should know better than anyone that I'm not the kind of person to do something like that… *ha*… *hoo*…" Lee Seol-Ho said.

"Stop lying. I trusted you. And… and this is the result… of my trust?" she asked angrily.

"I'm telling you I've been framed…" he said again.

Lee Seol-Ho became a parrot that repeatedly said that he was framed while crying; obviously, I didn't feel bad for him. Actually, I was really happy. It was a bit funny for

me to feel this way while looking at the pitiful old man that had lost everything, but it was probably because I recalled Jung Ha-Yan's condition from earlier.

"I've been framed! I didn't kill him! Jung-Yeon! Please say something! There's no reason for me to kill Seung-Joon…" he said desperately.

"Please shut up. Lee Seol-Ho, people like you are…"

"It's not true… that's not what happened. Jung-Yeon, I really didn't kill the guild master," he told her.

"You trash. How could you do that to him… when he did so much for you?" Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

"I didn't kill him! *Heuk*…" he yelled.

I noticed the other gramps trembling beside him and some of them were even preparing to change their minds, but it was pointless.

"We really didn't know."

"I-I have nothing to do with it."

'What a bunch of bullshit.'

"Lock all of them up. There's no exception," Lee Sang-Hee said.

"L- Let go of me! I only did it because Lee Seol-Ho ordered me to, Miss Lee Sang-Hee! Bringing in the guild from Celia was entirely his idea! That's all I know!" one of the gramps yelled.

"I really didn't know anything about the guild master's death. Please believe me. Please… that senile old man planned all of this!"

"Did you not hear me?! Lock all of them up," Lee Sang-Hee yelled.

The guild's guards pushed the gramps using their spears and started arresting them. The parrots that desperately yelled out that they were being framed established a chorus.

“I’m being framed! This is a set-up!’

“It’s all a lie! Miss Lee Sang-Hee! Please believe… *ack!*”

Even the people that were criticizing Lee Seol-Ho started protesting. What I found to be most ridiculous was the fact that those gramps also believed that Lee Seol-Ho killed Joo Seung-Joon. Even though this was the result of solid evidence, seeing them believe that it was the truth was still amusing.

“We don’t know anything, Miss Lee Sang-Hee! I never thought that Lee Seol-Ho would kill the Guildmaster. Please…”

It was natural for Lee Sang-Hee to feel complicated about this and she might even feel that the Blue Guild had instantly become a mess, but in order to start new, abandoning the old ways was the right thing to do. No matter how much freshwater we bring in, it would be difficult to purify it when there was already so much stagnant water, so getting rid of it all at once was the right decision. The guild may become a bit chaotic for the time being, but no matter how much I thought about it, this was the best way.

When it was difficult for me to get rid of my grin, I heard someone’s voice next to me and it was none other than Lee Seol-Ho.

“You… dirty alchemist! How dare you use that wicked silver tongue of yours to make a fool of the Blue Guild!”

“You’re the one that made a fool of the Blue Guild, you disgusting traitor,” I said to him.

“I didn’t kill him! This is all part of your setup,” he yelled at me.

“It’s ridiculous seeing you make excuses until the very end. I suggest you just acknowledge your sins since that’s the least you can do for the people that put faith in you all this time,” I said.

“I didn’t kill…”

“That’s what all the murderers say, but in the end, they confess with their own mouths. It’s really shocking to see you deny the facts even when there’s solid evidence. If you at least showed that you were reflecting, then we would have at least

been considerate," I said.

"Sang-Hee, please believe me just this once," Lee Seol-Ho begged.

"Miss Lee Sang-Hee, you already trusted him many times," I told her.

"It's a setup. That dirty alchemist is like cancer to the guild. He needs to be killed. Locking him up is the right thing to do! That trash will one day become a monster that will swallow the entire guild," he told her.

"*Geez*, you sure talk a lot. Look here, Mr. Lee Seol-Ho. I'm not sure what you did for the Blue Guild that you're so obsessed with it, but you're not the owner of the guild. You colluded with another guild behind Miss Lee Sang-Hee's back, used assassins to try to kill the new guild members and you even killed the guild master, so you're not even worthy of saying the guild's name," I explained.

"You bastard!" he yelled.

"People like you are nothing but stagnant water that causes trouble for the guild. Normal people would try to work together to take care of the problem that the group is experiencing because that's the right thing to do, but people like you would never do something like that. To you, the things in your possession are more important," I said.

In fact, when there had been a gold confiscation campaign in the past, the upper-class people were spared by not surrendering their possessions and Lee Seol-Ho was just like them.

He kept pleading with Lee Sang-Hee by using the relationship they had, but she was so shocked that she just sat in her chair quietly and was spacing out. I was worried about her mental health, but I was certain she was capable of overcoming it.

'I'm sure Hyun-Sung will take care of her.'

Seeing how they had been together a lot recently, I was sure that he would take care of Lee Sang-Hee's mental help when he arrived later.

She didn't bother looking at Lee Seol-Ho. Perhaps it was because she thought that she would have a hard time suppressing her anger if she kept looking at him.

Anyway, the old forces that were eating away at the Blue Guild were taken to the basement like linked sausages, and the screams I kept hearing sounded really funny to me.

After confirming that the situation was coming to an end, I started moving and it was to check up on the old forces of the guild.

The guild felt much cleaner now that we had taken care of the stagnant water.

When I headed to the basement, I heard the parrots screaming. Seeing the guards forcefully handle the helpless old forces was such a refreshing sight and this became even more possible because some of the gramps were crying their eyes out.

When I kept looking around, I heard a voice beside me.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, regarding Mr. Lee Seol-Ho, no, what should we do with them…” a guard asked.

I guess he was the guard of the basement prison. It was a bit surprising that the guard was a woman, but after checking her stats and nature, I discovered that she was capable enough of managing the prison.

“I think it’ll be best to leave them like this until the sub guild master makes a decision. You just need to provide them with enough water and food so that they don’t die,” I answered.

“Understood,” she said.

“Also, could you step outside for a moment? There’s something I need to ask these criminals,” I requested.

“Do you need to interrogate them more?” she asked.

“Yes, I do. Actually, I’d appreciate it if you could stand and watch the entrance for me just in case,” I said.

“Okay,” she said.

“The basement prison is quite big. I can tell that you’ve been taking good care of it,” I said, complimenting her.

“It’s nothing, but thank you,” she said.

“I’ll borrow one of the chairs here.”

“Yes, of course, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” she said.

Seeing her walk away after our short conversation made me realize that she was quick to catch on.

When I slowly entered the prison while dragging the chair, the gramps that were in their cells stared at me. It was satisfying to see them looking at me for help behind bars. I heard a lot of voices. Some were cursing at me while others were trying to flatter me, but I obviously had no business with them. It was Lee Seol-Ho that I wanted to talk to.

When I sat down after placing the chair, I noticed a depressed Lee Seol-Ho staring at me with his missing arm. It was natural for him to feel agitated while looking at me and I immediately heard him cursing at me.

“You… you bastard! You bastard! Don’t think this is over, you dirty piece of shit!”

“That’s what I wanted to say, so thanks for saying that for me, you crazy old man,” I told him.

I started to envelop my surroundings with my mana. It was a small amount, but it was more than enough to create a space where Lee Seol-Ho and I could talk.

“What do you…”

“Saying that this isn’t over is what I should be saying to you because I’m more spiteful than you think. I don’t show any mercy to my enemies… *pffft.* You’ve really made me mad. Really…” I told him.

“What…”

“You won’t be able to leave anything behind. You won’t be able to leave anything behind in this guild, Seol-Ho,” I said.

“What the hell are you…”

“The guild from Celia that you colluded with will rescue you from the guild’s basement prison,” I told him.

“What?” Lee Seol-Ho asked.

“Lee Seol-Ho, the murderer that killed the guild master and the criminal of the Blue Guild that betrayed Lee Sang-Hee’s trust will officially escape from the basement prison, but unofficially, you’ll be taken to the Red Mercenary Guild’s underground torture room. A priest that I’m close to will be personally taking care of you, so I hope you’re excited, gramps. You’ll be able to experience just how interesting a human’s body is and you’ll also experience just how spiteful a priest that volunteers for a god really is,” I explained.

“You… you bastard! You bastard!’ he yelled.

“All the gramps here including you will experience a horrible death and be thrown away somewhere. Of course, this will make it look like the guild from Celia killed you in order to get rid of the evidence. *Hehe!* The media will put Lee Seol-Ho, the traitor of the Blue Guild, in the headlines and people will start talking about it. Everyone in Lindel will talk about just how shitty you are over a few drinks. The Blue Guild that got hurt because of you will try their best to forget your name and even before half a year passes, your name will slowly be forgotten by everyone,” I told him.

“…”

“Everything will be forgotten including your death, the things that you contributed to the guild up until now, and all the things you achieved. One by one, they will be forgotten, as if the person named Lee Seol-Ho never existed. You’ll end up being nothing and you’ll die with nothing,” I added.

“You… you!”

“Don’t worry about it so much, gramps. I’ll remember you. While the priest that I’m close to kindly looks after you, I’ll quietly stand on the side and watch. The sound of your screams, your face filled with pain, and even your voice when you call out for help, I won’t forget any of it. Until all of that is over… I’m going to watch you quietly,” I said.

“You scum! You think you’ll be able to do that?! You! You?!” Lee Seol-Ho yelled.

“I’m going to offer your painful expression to my precious person who risked her life for me. Your voice will always remain in my head as the voice of the old man that had made a wrong decision, and you will always be a lesson for me. You’ll nourish my growth and in order to take that in, I’ll watch you quietly until the very end…” I told him.

“…”

Lee Seol-ho remained quiet and when I looked at him while leaning forward in my chair, he must have imagined what was going to happen to him in the future because his face had turned pale.

“Look… Ki-Young…” he said.

“…”

“How about we make a deal?” he asked.

“…”

“This isn’t right… even if we didn’t have a good relationship… I don’t think this is right. It’s such a dishonorable death. Not like this,” he said.

“…”

“I can’t die like this. Not like… *heuk*… *heuuuk*…”

Not being able to leave anything behind was a heartbreaking fact for people like him. I guess he must have felt that his existence was being denied because I noticed him crying and it was also probably because he was scared of the painful times he was going to experience from now on.

I didn’t bother saying anything to him and simply remained quiet while looking at him as if we were rehearsing what was going to happen to him in the future.

“…”

I didn’t say a word.

CHAPTER 108
I'M GOING TO REMEMBER YOU (2)

“Those guys deserve retribution…”

“They got what they deserved.”

“I saw a lot of shitty people while living here, but I’ve never seen anyone like him. They said that he planned that attack in order to kill a new guild member… I feel bad for the innocent people, but think about how shocked the guild members were.”

“Did you hear? The guild member that was attacked was the Mercenary Queen’s lover. A friend of mine that’s part of the Red Mercenary Guild said that the atmosphere in the guild is bad…”

“If that’s true, then shouldn’t we be relieved that war didn’t break out? *Oh!* There he is… *Hey,* Mr. Kim! Did you read the newspaper today?”

“If you’re talking about the pro-Japanese member in the Blue Guild, then, of course, I read it. Thanks to that, I was able to sleep comfortably last night.”

“Is your shop okay?”

“Besides the insurance, the Blue Guild compensated me, so I don’t think I’ll have issues restoring my shop, but honestly, the Blue Guild didn’t have to do that. People like me will gladly accept it, but I do feel bad about it. I thought that they were going to give me a small amount just so I would ignore the situation, but they gave me a good amount so I won’t have any trouble setting up a new shop. *Hahaha.*”

“He sure looks like he’s feeling better. Maybe you should buy us a drink.”

I heard a lot of different voices and the majority of them were either cursing Lee Seol-Ho or were worried about the Blue Guild.

The restoration cost of the city was the biggest problem. Thanks to the expansion of the media, the guilds and clans that were trying to create a good public image

donated, and if it wasn't for them, I was sure that the Blue Guild wouldn't be able to handle the restoration on their own. The guild was indebted to the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild once again.

As I looked at the buildings that were intact while walking around, I saw provocative newspaper titles.

[Lee Seol-Ho, the Traitor of the Blue Guild, Found Dead at Ramadel Mountain near Celia.]

[Why Did He Make That Kind of Decision? - Kim Sung-Kyeon's War of Words]

[The Japanese Guild That Lee Seol-Ho Colluded With. The Impact on the Future Relationship Between the Free City of Celia and Lindel]

Everything was happening as I expected.

After the most hated person of the Black Swan Guild incident, Lindel had been in a boring state and since this incident caused such a massive uproar, the media would naturally want a piece of the action.

Everyone in Lindel was talking about it and there were a lot of people in pubs and the plaza that expressed their opinion about this incident. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that 90 percent of the conversation was about this incident because this was relatable to the guild members that were part of a large guild, the executives, and the ordinary adventurers who only lived for today.

While walking, I turned my eyes and noticed the article in the newspaper that was in my hand.

[The Blue Guild is Facing a Great Ordeal. What's Their Next Move?]

[After the terrorist attack that happened within the city, it has been days since people tried to track down the criminals, and the search party of the Red Mercenary

Guild found dozens of bodies near the Ramadel Mountain. They believe that the identities of the bodies are Lee Seol-Ho, the criminal, and the executives of the Blue Guild that followed him.

According to the identification results, the Blue Guild confirmed that they are indeed the bodies of Lee Seol-Ho and his followers. Thus, the official search ended on the 15th.

Considering the fact that the bodies were badly mangled and that it was impossible to recognize them, it's possible that they were tortured cruelly by a torture expert.

The members of the Red Mercenary Guild pegged the guild from Celia to be responsible for their deaths and believed that the reason behind it was to either get rid of the evidence, or they were simply taking out their anger for messing up the plan.

Lee Sang-Hee, the Blue Guild's sub guild master, has yet to make an official appearance as everyone's attention within Lindel is on the Blue Guild. As one of the guilds that used to represent the free city of Lindel, it seems impossible to make a comeback after losing their guild master, Joo Seung-Joon, and the other party members.

Even though they still have a good relationship with the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild, many mid-sized guilds have been sending offers to the parties of the Blue Guild. Many recruiters within Lindel are looking forward to seeing what kind of decision the executives of the Blue Guild will make.

While many experts are concerned about whether the Blue Guild is going to disappear like this, Cha Hee-Ra (28), the Mercenary Queen, expressed that she'll always be an ally to the Blue Guild no matter what kind of decision they make and will do her best to support them. Lee Ji-Hye, the representative of the Black Swan Guild, also expressed that the Blue Guild is going to rise up again and dismissed many of the rumors that have been going around.

I'm not exactly sure what kind of actions the Blue Guild will take after experiencing so many hardships, but considering the things that the guild has shown us so far, I believe they'll overcome this ordeal as well. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong, Lindel Daily Report]

'Not bad.'

It was a well-written article. What I liked the most was their positive opinion toward the Blue Guild and even though it was inevitable for the press to talk about the incident, unlike the other press who stated that the guild was a sinking ship, Lindel Daily was the most reliable one.

'The same thing can be said about Kim Sung-Kyeong… '

Seeing how he continuously wrote positive articles about us, I guess he wasn't planning on changing sides. I wasn't sure if he had a keen sense or was just loyal, but I thought that it would be best to take care of him later.

While I was nodding, I heard the voice that I heard all day last night. It was Sun Hee-Young.

"What are you reading?"

"It's an article. I was getting sleepy just walking around and not thinking about anything. You don't seem all that tired, Miss Hee-Young," I said.

"I actually feel a bit refreshed. I finally got the time to do some volunteer work for God. Just by looking at the reaction of the citizens living here, I realized just how rewarding our time together had been and I felt good being able to do these things again," she explained.

"I didn't do anything. You were the one that worked hard, Miss Hee-Young," I told her.

"You prepared many things. You stayed with me and… if I had been by myself, I wouldn't have been able to work this hard," she said.

'That's not true.'

In fact, I thought that it wouldn't matter whether I was there or not. It had been a bit quiet lately, but I guess our priest felt most rewarded when she was volunteering and she looked extremely satisfied regarding the Lee Seol-Ho incident. I did get the feeling that she didn't like that old man from the start, but I never imagined that she was actually *that* angry toward him. Sun Hee-Young held a bigger grudge than I

thought.

'Lazy thoughts and a lazy mind are what makes you the evil of society. You're just as useless as the vagrants in the slums. People like you are ruining society and that's why there are always people who need help. Repent. Of course, what I want aren't words of repentance.'

'Ahhhhhh!'

When I recalled what happened yesterday, I honestly didn't feel good about it and it was to the point that I felt proud of myself for not looking away. I almost vomited, but after suppressing whatever was climbing up inside me, I was able to look at Sun Hee-Young.

"Thank you very much for what you said to me back then," she said.

"What did I say?" I asked.

"You said let's make a beautiful Lindel together," she answered.

"Right, I did."

"Of course, I felt anxious back then, but seeing these results makes me a little bit happy. It's been a while since we worked together and… anyway, it has been a good day," she said happily.

No matter how you looked at it, Sun Hee-Young acted like a priest and for some reason, I felt like we were getting closer. Rather than saying that it was planned, it was more like she was showing me her natural reaction because our relationship had improved.

'Not you too, please.'

Having a co-worker relationship with Sun Hee-Young was the best because I was already getting stressed by the women that were around me. I understood her feelings because I was her only ally and the best comrade that helped her open her

eyes. Of course, I didn't think that she had romantic feelings for me yet, but if my relationship with her deepened, then my life would become even more exhausting.

Even if I showed that I had a deep connection with Jung Ha-Yan, polygamy was taken for granted in this world anyway. Just by looking around now, I could see men with several women and vice versa, so it wasn't something that people frowned upon like back on Earth. Actually, even if a person had a lover or a wife, it was rare to gather so many lovers so quickly, so if Sun Hee-Young wanted to become closer to me, then I was sure that she wouldn't take Jung Ha-Yan or Cha Hee-Ra into consideration.

'I need to block it before it happens.'

While maintaining a certain distance…

"How about we get something to eat before heading back? It's been a while since we're out, so maybe some breakfast…" Sun Hee-Young suggested.

"Yeah, that sounds good," I said.

Maintaining a certain distance was a bit difficult, but I was certain that eating a meal together was fine.

After entering a restaurant with a terrace and ordering food after taking a seat, Sun Hee-Young immediately spoke. "What do you think about yesterday, Mr. Ki-Young?"

"It was a rewarding volunteer work," I answered.

"You're right, it was volunteer work. *Hehe.* It was very rewarding, too. It's great that I had someone to share this with," she said.

"You're right."

"I've been thinking about this every day, but I'm really thankful, Mr. Ki-Young. I may not be good at expressing myself, but you helped me realize that I was wrong," she told me.

"Haha…"

I didn't like how this was going, so I thought that quickly changing the subject was the right thing to do.

“By the way, how is Ha-Yan doing?” I asked.

“She’s still recovering. Her body has fully recovered and it’s all thanks to the priests of the Red Mercenary Guild. The reason why she hasn’t woken up yet is that her body feels exhausted, so you don’t have to worry so much,” she explained.

“I see, that’s a relief.”

“What are you planning on doing from now on, Mr. Ki-Young?” she asked.

“Excuse me?” I asked.

“I’m asking whether you’re going to remain at the Blue Guild because it seems like you haven’t been getting involved with the guild lately…” she answered.

“*Oh.*”

I had an idea what she was talking about.

Recently, I hadn’t been able to focus on the Blue Guild, actually, it would be better to say that I *wasn’t* focusing on the guild. The guild was in an unstable position both externally and internally, so this wasn’t the best time to exert influence on the guild, but the reason why I hadn’t been doing it was because of Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘It’s better if only one person has the power.’

From my perspective, I had basically set everything up for him and all he had to do was take it. Lee Sang-Hee basically retired from her position and Hwang Jung-Yeon wasn’t interested in obtaining power, so it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that Kim Hyun-Sung was already in the process of obtaining power. When thinking back to when Kim Hyun-Sung joined the guild, he managed the guild as a regent and not as a guild master, but when considering his skills, I was sure that many people would have faith and support him. If I were to offer my help to the Blue Guild right now, it could backfire, so even if Kim Hyun-Sung ended up obtaining that power, I still contributed the most in helping him get there, so I would get a lot of benefits anyway.

‘There’s no need to be pitiful and ask him to take care of me.’

I thought that taking a step back and making him feel troubled would put me in a more advantageous position since I was a competent person who was absolutely

necessary for Kim Hyun-Sung's kingdom.

"I've been a bit busy lately. Mr. Hyun-Sung has been staying with Miss Lee Sang-Hee and even though people are saying that the guild is going through a crisis, I don't think that's true," I answered.

"I see."

"This is actually a great opportunity for us to create a proper guild since we have gotten rid of the stagnant waters," I added.

"*Oh!* I-I see. I'd expect nothing less from you, Mr. Ki-Young. I didn't even think about that…" she said.

"Hahaha…"

"Then I should wait on taking a break. I-I'm a bit embarrassed to tell you this, but I hoped for a brief moment that we would have more time to volunteer together. *Oh*! B-But please don't misunderstand. I don't have any romantic feelings for you… since we have the same hobby… if we do it together every day… you see…" Sun Hee-Young said.

"*Oh,* I think I understand what you're trying to say," I told her.

For some reason, her face turned red.

'Oh… '

I noticed what she was thinking. I thought that she was imagining us building a house of service, living there, and living a life of service.

'I won't be happy with that.'

If someone did build a house like that, it would be a house you see in horror movies, not a loving house.

Sun Hee-Young just had a twisted mind and not a twisted affection. Her way of thinking was different from Jung Ha-Yan, who wanted to lock me up and stay with me forever. Since she was a priest that worked for God, I was sure that she wouldn't come up with unique ideas like that.

'But I don't think she's normal… '

"I don't think it's a bad idea to live the life that you're thinking of, but there are other important matters and I think Mr. Hyun-Sung will be able to clean up the guild's internal mess sooner or later. I've experienced many things and we took care of a big incident last night, so consider it as a reward for yourself," I told her.

"Basically, you're saying that you're taking a break. *Hehe*. Thanks to you, we spent a lot of time together. *Oh!* B-But I don't mean anything by that," Sun Hee-Young quickly explained.

"Yes, I understand," I told her.

Obviously, I wasn't planning on living in Sun Hee-Young's house that was overflowing with love, affection, and a life of service because my biggest problem was figuring out Kim Hyun-Sung's big picture. He may be inexperienced with politics, but he was still Kim Hyun-Sung. When I saw that he was constantly with Lee Sang-Hee to take care of and comfort her every day made me think that he had a plan of his own.

'He's pretty crafty.'

If I were him, I also would have thought that winning her favor was the first thing that had to be done. I couldn't say that I contributed a lot, but if he didn't succeed despite the situation that I had set up for him, then he wasn't worthy of being the regressor. As such, I was certain that he would show some results soon.

'I wonder what our Hyun-Sung is doing.'

I flinched because I recalled a joke that Lee Ji-Hye had made a long time ago, but I was still a bit curious as to what our lovely Hyun-Sung was thinking about.

CHAPTER 109
RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST (1)

[1]

“Miss Hye-Jin, what brings you…”

“Master, Miss Jung Ha-Yan has passed away. The cause of her death is still unclear, but we’re assuming it’s su-suicide,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“What? What do you…”

“I know it’s hard to believe, but it’s true,” she said, interrupting Kim Hyun-Sung.

“I’m sure you’re making a mis…”

“…”

“So, she really died,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Yes. The guild members of the Devil’s Guild found her hanging from her neck this morning in her room,” she said.

“Y-You don’t think it was murder? What about the possibility of assassins breaking in and…”

“No, I’m certain it’s suicide. We found her will and… I’m not sure about this either, but… we found unidentifiable letters in Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s room. It’s difficult to decode because it’s encrypted with magic, but after we heard the news, we’re considering the possibility that she’s been colluding with another guild,” she explained.

“Are you saying that she was a traitor?”

“It’s only an assumption.”

“I don’t think that’s true. When considering the performance of Lindel’s genius mage, it’s illogical to think that she would do something like that. If she had the chance to collude with them, she would’ve been on their side a long time ago,” he pointed out.

“The master is right, Miss Hye-jin. If it wasn’t for Lindel’s genius mage then we wouldn’t have been able to maintain the battle from the start. It’s not an exaggeration to say that it was because of her that we were able to endure it up until now. It’s all thanks to Miss Jung Ha-Yan that we were able to win the battles at Ramadel Mountain, the Northern Frost Wall, and even the defensive battle at Benigoa. Her colluding with another guild is probably the wrong information and it’s possible that they’re saying that in order to divide us…”

“…”

“Her will… what was written in her will, Miss Hye-Jin?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“I was told, ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry,’ was what was written, but the Devil’s Guild is refusing to reveal her will, so I wasn’t able to confirm everything that was written on there, but… they said that there were signs of abuse on her body,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Are you certain that she wasn’t murdered?” he asked.

“Yes. I heard that the injuries were from a long time ago. They’re speculating that they may have been self-inflicted, given that the wounds weren’t treated and pus had formed on the wounds. Despite the fact that they could be treated with potions and holy magic, she didn’t get her wounds treated,” she answered.

“Self-inflicted…”

“Yes, it’s possible, Master. I heard that Miss Jung Ha-Yan had a really hard time killing others, that she would have nightmares after each fight, and that she really disliked participating in battles. She didn’t even like killing an ant, so I’m sure that she felt guilty when she suddenly had to participate in battles,” she said.

It made sense. After considering Jung Ha-Yan, Lindel’s archmage’s nature, it was natural for her to think that way.

‘Being on the battlefield was… ’

Too much for her.

“If that’s true… then it’s entirely my fault. I shouldn’t have called her to the battlefield,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“No, it’s not your fault, Master. You weren’t the only one who convinced Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Everyone in the Holy Empire, the Republic, and the Union of Kingdoms hoped that Miss Jung-Yan would join the battle and the person that made the final decision was her. She didn’t make her decision because you convinced her, Master. Miss Jung Ha-Yan said that she was always indebted to the free citizens of the Holy Empire and Lindel. If she ran away and hid, then I’m sure no one would be able to find her. I’m certain that she had her reason to be on the battlefield,” Jo Hye-Jin explained.

“…”

“We still haven’t figured out the reason why she committed suicide. Master, I’m sure she really did feel guilty, but I don’t think she took her own life for that reason. It’s an undeniable fact that she felt pain, but… I’m sure she felt proud of the things that she had protected. When I first met her, that was the kind of person she was,” she said.

He saw it with his own eyes. He remembered how despite the fact that she had a difficult time socializing with other people, she would display a faint smile and shake the hands of the soldiers she saved, and she would even have conversations with them.

- It was worth it.

- You made a tough decision.

- It was nothing, Mr. Hyun-Sung. O-Of course it was difficult, but everyone’s fighting. A-And, I don’t feel annoyed by it. I feel better seeing everyone’s smiles, hehe… thank you for calling for me.

- It’s nothing. I should be the one thanking you.

He was certain that Jung Ha-Yan felt guilty and just as Jo Hye-Jin said, she had to endure a pain that Jung Ha-Yan herself had to endure by herself. The fact that she committed suicide because of guilt didn’t make sense.

“Then why…”

“We’re still trying to figure out the reason and we believe that the encrypted letters have some clues about it. The mages on the continent have been trying their best to decode it, but it isn’t easy,” she said.

“I see.”

Kim Hyun-Sung looked at Jo Hye-Jin with a slightly bitter look.

Boom!

He heard an explosion from somewhere, so for a moment, he thought that it was the enemy, but after hearing a voice, he had no choice but to put down his sword.

“Kim Hyun-Sung!”

“Miss Kim Ah-Young! You shouldn’t…”

“Shut up and open the door. I know you’re in there, Kim Hyun-Sung, so open the door!” she yelled.

“Please calm down and… h-he’s in a meeting right now.”

“Open the door while I’m asking nicely. I’m starting to lose my patience,” she threatened.

After hearing the loud noise, what Kim Hyun-Sung saw was a familiar face.

“Miss Ah-Young.”

“Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard!” Kim Ah-Young yelled.

The large sword that was pointed at him was getting closer. When he instinctively raised his sword, there was another loud noise and the sound of swords clashing in the air filled the room. The objects around them immediately flew in all directions and the windows shattered upon being unable to withstand the pressure.

“You bastard! You killed my unnie!” Kim Ah-Young yelled.

“…”

“You dragged her into war, you piece of shit! It’s because of you that unnie died!”

“…”

“Miss Ah-Young, what do you think you’re doing? We’re in the middle of a war. How dare you barge in here and point your sword at our guild master?! We’re going to file an official complaint to your guild,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Shut up, Jo Hye-Jin. If you continue blabbering like that, I won’t stand down. Complaint? Go ahead and do it. What’s the point of filing a complaint at a time like this? Do whatever you want since we’re all going to die anyway. I don’t give a fuck about that!” Kim Ah-Young said.

“But…”

“I’ve told you before, right Kim Hyun-Sung? That unnie wasn’t going to participate in the war… she died because of your petty greed,” she said.

“If Miss Jung Ha-Yan didn’t participate on the battlefield, then many innocent people would’ve died, Miss Kim Ah-Young,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Didn’t I tell you to stay quiet? I’m talking to Kim Hyun-Sung,” she said.

“He didn’t have any choice. Even though our master did convince Miss Jung Ha-Yan, it’s because of her that we won many battles…”

“It’s because of those battles that unnie was killed. She died! You should’ve listened to her when she said that she didn’t want to participate,” Kim Ah-Young said.

“We still haven’t figured out the reason why she committed suicide. The fact that she committed suicide as a result of the shock of the battle hasn’t been confirmed yet. We need to check her will and the encrypted letters,” Jo Hye-Jin explained.

“Do you hear yourself when you’re talking? We’ve already come too far for you to talk bullshit like that, you dirty hypocrites. I should’ve listened to them!” she said angrily.

“Who…”

“It’s none of your business!” Kim Ah-Young yelled.

“I’m sorry.”

“So now you’re apologizing? Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard… a hero? A hero my ass!” she exclaimed.

“If you would just think calmly…”

“Shut up. Our guild will no longer be part of this alliance. It was all bullshit when they said that the people that once fought against each other can become one. Holding hands with the Republic and with the Union of Kingdoms was impossible, and listening to you in the first place was a mistake on my part. Kim Hyun-Sung, the hero that saved hundreds of thousands of lives, is all bullshit. What’s the point of that when my unnie is dead? She’s dead! It doesn’t matter to me how many people had been saved because of her. Got it?” she said.

“…”

“You won’t be seeing me again.”

“Please wait, Miss Kim Ah-Young,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“Jo Hye-Jin.”

“I’m sure Miss Jung Ha-Yan didn’t take her own life because she felt guilty,” she said.

“Bullshit,” Kim Ah-Young said.

“Even if that was the reason, I’m sure that she wouldn’t want you to act this way. It’s true that she was in a lot of pain, but I can clearly remember how happy Miss Jung Ha-Yan was when she saved all those people,” Jo Hye-Jin told her.

“…”

“We still haven’t confirmed the information that was written in her will and we haven’t looked into whether it was an assassination or not. There could be a clue in the encrypted letters or her will. After the investigation is complete and it’s revealed that Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s death is connected to us…”

“…”

“I’ll apologize for it with my own death,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“I don’t care about your life,” Kim Ah-Young said.

It would be strange not to know what Kim Ah-Young was thinking, so Kim Hyun-Sung had no choice but to talk to her. “I feel the same way. After everything is over, I’ll apologize for it with my own death.”

“Master!”

“This is the right thing to do, Miss Hye-Jin. I’m sure that I’m responsible for it as well and after this war is over, I was going to put an end to my own life in my own way, anyway,” he said.

He thought that maybe he didn’t deserve to live because he made so many mistakes to get to where he was right now. Honestly, it was ridiculous to try and apologize for those mistakes now, but he didn’t have a choice because he believed that there was still work that had to be done.

It was understandable for Kim Ah-Young to feel complicated about this and she probably had a lot going through her head. Just when she was waiting for his answer…

Boom!!!

They heard an explosion from somewhere and when another loud sound reverberated, they realized that there was an enemy invasion.

“What?”

“The enemy is attacking!”

“Master!”

“It’s an attack! Miss Jo Hye-Jin, currently behind the wall… *ahhhhhh!*”

Kim Hyun-Sung was used to attacks coming from places he couldn’t see, but this attack was a different type of magic. The unknown energy was targeting Kim Ah-Young, so of course, she started dodging. When she blocked it with her sword, the magic split and completely destroyed the walls on both sides.

“We’ll move to the walls.”

“B-But… I’m!”

“We need to work together for now and after it’s over, you can decide what you want to do with me, Miss Ah-Young. Please lend me your strength for now,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Damn it,” she cursed.

“Miss Hye-Jin, is Miss Cha Hee-Ra still in the city?” he asked.

“Yes, she’s been sending reinforcement signals since 12 o’clock. The Red Mercenary Guild is probably heading toward…”

Booooooom!

A white light swallowed Lindel.

The white light that appeared out of nowhere filled the surrounding area and his closed eyes started to open.

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 110
RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST (2)

[1]

“It was a dream…”

It was a dream that I was somewhat used to now.

When I looked out of the window after sitting up, I felt like I could clearly feel the explosion and the light I felt at that time. I shook my head, but it didn’t change anything. When I gulped, I heard someone knocking on the door.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung, it’s time for our meeting. Miss Lee Sang-Hee called the remaining party members and executives in the guild.”

“Oh, okay. I’ll be right there,” I told them.

“Okay, within 30 minutes…”

“Yes, I’ll be there within 30 minutes,” I said.

A lot of things were going through my head.

When I dreamed about my first life, I always woke up to the same morning. I would look around and then remind myself where I was. When I got up and headed to the bathroom, my haggard face was reflected in the mirror.

‘I haven’t been able to sleep recently.’

I had been busy outside of the guild.

The terrorist attack that happened recently didn’t happen during my first life and to make things worse, I had never imagined that someone would do something like that at that time of day when the sun hadn’t completely set.

'I was lazy.'

I should've kept a better eye on Lee Seol-Ho's personality. I knew that he didn't have a good relationship with Lee Ki-Young, but I never imagined that he would request something like that. Thanks to that, it put the Blue Guild in a favorable position, but the fact that Jung Ha-Yan got injured was a painful mistake that couldn't be replaced with anything else.

'We need her.'

She was going to be a mage that would represent Lindel, no, the Holy Empire of Benigoa in the future, and the actions she would show in the war, later on, would be beyond anyone's imagination. If she didn't actually die, then there was a good chance that the war would have ended in victory for the humans. As Lindel's archmage who was respected by everyone, she was more overpowering than any hero and I was certain that in this life, she would be given the most important role. Based on how fast she had been growing recently, I could see it already.

'Talent.'

She was a person that was born with magic. The more results she showed, the more I nodded in appreciation at the achievements of Lindel's genius mage.

There wasn't a lot of information about Jung Ha-Yan during my first life. She joined the Devil's Guild as a researcher under the condition that she wouldn't participate in expedition or war and for a long time, she never showed herself to the public. Based on her personality, I was able to assume what kind of life she had been living. Due to the influence of a situation I didn't know about, she refused to socialize with other people and locked herself in the magic tower. Her life was probably really boring because all she did was study magic all day and then sleep so it was possible that she had never gone outside. Besides Kim Ah-Young, she refused to talk to other people, so my assumption was most likely correct.

'She lacks social skills.'

That could be considered a flaw, but there was a reason why I took a lot of chances and considered her my comrade.

Growth wouldn't happen overnight. Many people had their own stories and they grow through the personal pains they had experienced. Some people would

experience the death of a comrade, the betrayal of a lover, while others would only be able to fulfill their roles after a near-death experience.

The same could be said for Jung Ha-Yan. The reason why she was so strong was that she was always in the magic tower studying magic while refusing to socialize with other people. When taking that into consideration, I thought that maybe sending Jung Ha-Yan to the Devil's Guild was the right thing to do, but after thinking about her final moments, I thought that protecting her mentality was more important than her growth. But right now, the fact that Jung Ha-Yan was growing was one of the best choices I had ever made and not just on the outside, but on the inside as well.

'Not only that… '

She was also in a relationship. This was something that I couldn't imagine in my first life. She did have a flaw where she seemed slightly obsessive, but maintaining her relationship with Lee Ki-Young was the answer. By continuously maintaining her relationship with Lee Ki-Young, she could avoid making an extremely difficult decision in the future and she could avoid the horrible ending I saw in my dream just now. Even if she approached me for something I couldn't provide her with, Lee Ki-Young would naturally step in and help her instead.

Lee Ki-Young was a type of person that was completely different from all the people I had seen so far, and he was also very competent. My assumption must be correct.

In many ways, The right thing to do was to continuously show interest in Lee Ki-Young and Jung Ha-Yan's relationship because I needed a competent person that could handle this type of attack when I wasn't around. The person I was thinking about was Jo Hye-Jin, my assistant. She was known as the goddess of the spear because she could defeat any enemy with just a spear.

'She may be in Lindel by now… '

After thinking for a moment, I quickly washed up and when I walked outside, I saw a familiar sight.

Even though the guild's guide was bowing, it felt like the empty guild was telling me that this was the fall of the Blue Guild and in the guild's current state, it was difficult to call this a *guild*. Even though we were still maintaining our alliance with the other guilds, the guild's commission office was closed and the majority of the ordinary

guild members had already left the guild. On top of that, some of the party members of party two had already decided on transferring to another guild. If this continued, then the Blue Guild would really be forgotten in Lindel.

Recently, Lee Ki-Young had been spending a lot of time at the Red Mercenary Guild and people were worried that he was going to leave the guild, but I was certain that it wasn't the case. It was all because I had an idea as to what he wanted.

'I'm sure he wants me to do it… '

He was waiting for me to seize the power within the Blue Guild.

'He's competent.'

The Lee Ki-Young I knew might be able to handle this situation. The reason why he wasn't getting involved with the guild was that he wanted me, the party leader, to have more power, so he understood what I wanted. It was like he knew exactly what I was thinking, so he prepared everything in advance after grasping the situation.

As expected, after taking a few steps, I heard voices from all over the place.

"Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung."

"Yes?"

"There's a document that I need you to take a look at."

"Oh, okay," I said.

"There are also some issues that I need you to take a look at today… because… Mr. Lee Ki-Young isn't here right now…"

"Did you let Mr. Ki-Young know that there's a meeting today?" I asked.

"Yes, I heard he's on his way back right now. I heard he was at the Red Mercenary Guild yesterday, taking care of Miss Jung Ha-Yan…"

"Yes, I heard that too. Please leave the documents that require payment in my room. I'll check them myself after the meeting and discuss it with the master," I said.

“Okay, and would it be okay if I posted the announcement about the recruitment of guild members today?”

“I’ll make sure that you’re able to ask the guild master directly,” I told them.

I was asked a lot of questions on the way to the meeting room and I knew exactly what Lee Ki-Young was planning. After Lee Ki-Young left the guild by giving the excuse that he was nursing Jung Ha-Yan, many people ended up relying on me.

When I slowly started moving, I saw the meeting room and when I opened the door, I saw Lee Sang-Hee and Hwang Jung-Yeon waiting for me. Lee Sang-Hee looked haggard and Hwang Jung-Yeon, the leader of party two, was looking at her. The meeting room that was once filled with people only had five people now.

“You’re here.”

“Yes.”

“Is Mr. Ki-Young…”

“I heard that he’s on his way,” I said.

“That’s a relief.”

“It feels like it’s been a while since we had a meeting,” I said.

“It is and I’m sorry about that. I should’ve called for this meeting sooner, but… I didn’t have the luxury since so many things happened at once,” Lee Sang-Hee said.

Her eyes looked exhausted, but I knew that she would be able to overcome it because in my first life, she had overcome her pain.

“I think it would be best to tell you now even though Mr. Ki-Young isn’t here yet,” she said.

“Okay.”

“I’m sorry for constantly showing you this side of me. If I had thought about the people that remained in the Blue Guild, I should’ve shown a happier side of me and I’m very thankful for you two for supporting the guild while I was away,” she said.

“We only did what we thought was right.”

“While I was resting, I thought about many things and one of them was regarding what I should do with the Blue Guild moving forward. When thinking about the future of the party members, I know that disbanding the guild and sending you all to a different guild is what I should be doing, no, I’m sure it’s the right choice,” Lee Sang-Hee said.

“…”

“But, Mr. Joo… no, I just can’t disband the guild that the master built with his own hands. I’m very sorry to do this to you two, but I hope you’ll remain in this guild,” she said.

“Of course,” I said.

“Yes, with Master…” Hwang Jung-Yeon said.

“I’m no longer the master, Miss Jung-Yeon. It’s only right that I step down from this position,” she said.

“What?” Hwang Jung-Yeon asked.

“Not only did I put everyone in danger back at the Cursed Shrine, but when the master was healthy and even when he was lying in bed, I was simply wearing the title. I didn’t catch on to the fact that Lee Seol-Ho was colluding with the Japanese despite the fact that I was suspicious of him. Moreover, because of my relationship with him, I couldn’t do anything,” she explained.

“But…”

“This is a position that doesn’t fit me and as Mr. Ki-Young mentioned, I can be categorized as an incompetent person. Even if I obtain power over the Blue Guild again, it wouldn’t be any different from before, so it’s only right for me to step down. I know it’ll be difficult…” she said.

“I-I…” Hwang Jung-Yeon stuttered.

It wasn’t unexpected because I had a feeling that this was going to happen.

Even though Hwang Jung-Yeon didn't finish her sentence, I had a feeling that she was going to deny what Lee Sang-Hee said and Lee Sang-Hee's expression was turning serious by the second. If Lee Ki-Young was here, he would definitely say something right now. I was a bit cautious, but I thought that saying something right now was the right thing to do.

"If Miss Jung-Yeon doesn't really agree…"

"I don't," she said.

"I'll keep this position temporarily," I said.

Saying something like this might make me seem more reliable.

"*Oh…*"

"Of course, it'll be impossible for me to take care of every single issue, but if you two helped me so that I don't walk down the wrong path, I'm sure that it wouldn't take long to recover the glory that the Blue Guild once had," I explained.

"I see…"

"There's still a lot of competent people in the guild," I added.

At the same time, I heard a voice outside the room.

"It's Lee Ki-Young. I'm coming in…"

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung's POV ☜

CHAPTER 111
HURRY UP AND WORK! (1)

“There you are, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.”

“Oh, I’m sure I…”

“I’m Park Joong-Ki, a member of the guild,” he said.

“*Ohhh*, Mr. Joong-Ki. Yes, I remember you. How can I help you?’ I asked.

“The guild master asked that all the executive members gather,” he answered.

“I see. Please return to the guild first and let them know that I’ll be on my way,” I told him.

“Understood.”

Despite being an ordinary guild member, his agility points must be high because he disappeared in an instant and I was assuming that was the reason why he played the role of the messenger. As soon as I used my attribute, his stats just came pouring in.

‘His agility is below epic… ’

“Not bad.”

“Excuse me?” Sun Hee-Young asked.

“*Oh*, it’s nothing, Miss Hee-Young,” I said.

“Do you need to head back now? I think I heard him say that there’s a meeting…”

“I don’t think it’s anything urgent,” I told her.

“*Oh*, that’s a relief. Then, how about getting some coffee?” she suggested.

“Let’s stop by a coffee shop on the way back,” I said.

It was strange because it felt like we were on a date, but there wasn’t a reason for me to hurry back to the guild because I had an idea as to what the meeting was going to be about. Lee Sang-Hee must have finally made a decision after staying hidden for a long time and I was certain that the reason why she called for the executive members was that she wanted to discuss the future of the Blue Guild as well as the position of the guild master. She must be at her limit by now, so no matter what the meeting was about, it was only right to make a decision.

As a leader, Lee Sang-Hee was incompetent and I was sure that she knew that better than anyone. She had probably realized it even more during the time that I wasn’t at the guild. It was probably difficult to get back up again after all the administrative team left and if I were to be blunt, the already collapsed guild was sinking underground.

The issue wasn’t how Lee Sang-Hee was going to handle this amidst her exhaustion. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung was mentally prepared for anything that could happen, but there must be unseeable flaws in his plan. Even in his past life, I was certain that he only knew how to use a sword, so it was understandable for him to be unfamiliar with politics, but the result wasn’t what was important.

‘I can just create the result I want later, anyway.’

The thing that was important was what Kim Hyun-Sung was going to do right now since the Blue Guild was currently facing a crisis. Our Kim Hyun-Sung was a competent leader that possessed both power and intelligence, so I was sure that the guild members were relying on him while I was away.

‘I do feel bad for making him do all the work… ’

But I was certain that he understood what I was thinking.

‘That’s why he hasn’t said anything.’

After moving to a different location and talking to Sun Hee-Young while drinking the beverage that I was holding, I noticed that some time had passed. Honestly, talking to Sun Hee-Young was kind of fun. Out of all the women that I had talked to, if I were to pick the person that I got along with the best, Lee Ji-Hye would definitely be on top of the list, but there were some things that Sun Hee-Young and I had in common. She

was better than the blunt and straightforward Cha Hee-Ra.

“I should get going,” I told her.

“That’s unfortunate. It felt like it’s been a while since we had time off like this,” she said.

“I feel the same way, Miss He-Young. We should do this more often,” I said.

“Are you going to hang out with me more often?” she asked.

“Of course,” I answered.

After making a typical friendly suggestion, I started walking back.

Honestly, even while I was with Sun Hee-Young, all I could think about was if Kim Hyun-Sung was doing well and I wasn’t sure whether this was the right comparison, but I felt like I asked the person that wasn’t interested in housework to run some errands. I regretted for a moment that maybe I should have helped behind the scenes, but I believed that Kim Hyun-Sung was able to handle it on his own.

‘I’m sure he’s doing fine.’

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t an idiot and he was the type of person that would grab whatever was beneficial to him.

“I’ll see you at dinner after the meeting,” I told Sun Hee-Young.

“Sounds good,” she said.

Despite walking slower than usual, it didn’t take long for me to reach the guild. I guess I walked faster without realizing it because I was worried about whether Kim Hyun-Sung was doing well. After parting ways with Sun Hee-Young, I immediately headed to the guild’s meeting room. After knocking on the door, I noticed three people sitting in there with serious expressions.

“It’s Lee Ki-Young. I’m coming in…” I said.

“Come in.”

I saw Lee Sang-Hee looking at me with a composed look, Hwang Jung-Yeon had a look of relief, and Kim Hyun-Sung was looking at me with a small smile on his face. I couldn't help but realize that he was successful.

'Great.'

"I'm sorry for being late. There was a small accident on my way back…" I said.

"No, it's fine. I did call the meeting out of the blue," Lee Sang-Hee said.

"So what's going on…"

Kim Hyun-Sung was the one that answered.

"We were discussing what the Blue Guild should do moving forward and Miss Lee Sang-Hee explained that she wanted to step down from her position, so we were discussing that as well."

"I see…" I said.

'Nice.'

"I know I'm lacking, but I'll be taking care of the guild for the time being and Miss Lee Sang-Hee will act as an advisor and teach me about the position," he added.

I nodded slightly.

'Not bad.'

Giving Lee Sang-Hee the advisor role was a good idea. She was lacking as a leader, but it didn't mean that she was incompetent. The problem was that she was overly competent in other areas which could be the reason why she was incompetent as a leader. I was sure that she was worried about the guild members being confused and the reaction of others around us because of the sudden change in power, but based on her nature, she wasn't the type to get deeply involved. As such, it didn't make sense to let a competent person like her go to waste.

'We need to put everything in the past and get back to work. Even our Sang-Hee… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was more quick-witted than I thought and I was very satisfied with

him.

“You’ve made a hard decision. You too, Miss Lee Sang-Hee…” I said.

“It was nothing, Mr. Ki-Young. All this time, I felt like I was in a position that didn’t really fit me, and now that I’ve stepped down from it, I feel a lot better. Shall we get going now?” she suggested.

“Excuse me?” I asked.

“We need to let the other guild members know. Mr. Joong-Ki, please…”

“Everyone has gathered, just like you wanted,” he said.

“Then, let’s head there now,” she said.

I guess she really was burdened by her position seeing how she planned this and told Park Joong-Ki ahead of time.

I couldn’t help but smile.

I didn’t know what kind of conversation Kim Hyun-Sung had with Lee Sang-Hee, but I was sure that he was asking a lot of questions about the announcement. When I glanced over at the assembly hall, I noticed that there were a lot of people. Park Deok-Gu and Kim Ye-Ri, whom I hadn’t seen in a while, were sitting in the front row with Sun Hee-Young.

I was sure that I didn’t need to go up on stage today since they were going to announce the transfer of power to the guild members anyway.

“Hyung-nim,” Park Deok-Gu called out.

“How have you been?” I asked.

“Don’t you think you’ve been too busy lately?” he asked.

“I mean there’s a lot that’s been going on, but I think we’ll be spending a lot more time soon. I’m sure that things will get easier once we’re done rebuilding the guild,” I said.

“I hope that day comes soon… by the way, how is noonim doing?” he asked.

“I heard her talking in her sleep yesterday,” I answered.

“That’s a relief,” he said.

“Miss Sun Hee-Young said that she should wake up soon, so there’s no need to worry so much. More than that, focus on the announcement today,” I told him.

“I was actually surprised when they asked everyone to gather… is it interesting news?” he asked.

“You’ll see,” I answered.

It wasn’t just interesting. It was time for me to see with my own eyes the reward I deserved for all the work I had put into this guild.

After some time passed, I saw Lee Sang-Hee and Kim Hyun-Sung walking onto the stage. It wouldn’t really matter if Lee Sang-Hee simply handed the position over to Kim Hyun-Sung, but I guess she planned this out in order to officially step down from her position. When she spoke, it was in a calm voice that I hadn’t heard for a while now.

“The reason why I called all of you here is that I wanted to tell you the direction that the Blue Guild is going to take from now on and how we plan on moving more efficiently to handle the situation that the guild is currently going through. In conclusion, I’ve decided to step down from the job that has been burdening me for quite a while now.”

She looked a bit calm, but that didn’t mean that the audience was calm. People started sighing and were worried that she was going to leave the Blue Guild despite being one of the original members.

“The executive members and I have all agreed that Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung, the leader of party seven, would fit the role of the new guild master. I understand that we’re currently in a chaotic time and I’m embarrassed of showing this side to you all as the former leader of the guild, but I hope you’ll overcome this crisis with us,” she said.

I heard quiet claps here and there.

It was a good speech because it was short and powerful. The reason why she didn't use rhetoric was probably that she wanted to give Kim Hyun-Sung more time to talk. When Lee Sang-Hee quietly moved away, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung quietly standing up and moving toward the podium. He didn't look nervous or awkward when he got on the podium. On the contrary, he looked like he was used to it.

'Probably… '

Because he had been in a similar situation in his past life.

"It's an honor to be in this position. I know that many of you have expressed your concerns, but Miss Lee Sang-Hee didn't make this decision out of the blue. She had been thinking about it for quite a while now and had discussed it with me many times. I know it hasn't been that long since I joined the guild, so as the original member of the Blue Guild, Miss Lee Sang-Hee will remain in the guild as the guild's advisor," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'Nice. Good job, my Hyun-Sung.'

"The Blue Guild has been through a lot of pain and I'm sure that the guild members and the employees here have been with the Blue Guild for a long time, so I understand how upset all of you are regarding the recent incident," he said.

He was admirable.

"Let's think of this as a new beginning."

He was very admirable.

"Let's think of it as starting anew on an empty plain. The Blue Guild will change and I'm telling you right now that the change will start now. I know that this is so sudden, but I'll tell you about my plans for developing the guild," he started.

I didn't think that he prepared this much, but when I glanced over at Lee Sang-Hee, she looked as if she already knew about it. I didn't know when they discussed it, but I was certain it was still too early to talk about it because people weren't used to changes and it could cause resistance. Of course, their resistance wouldn't really mean much, but I thought that being cautious in the beginning was the right thing to do, but I guess Kim Hyun-Sung must have thought otherwise.

My heart started pounding when I saw him talking again. I would be lying if I said that I didn't have any expectations because I was looking forward to the position that Kim Hyun-Sung was going to prepare for me. When thinking about the contribution I made to the party and the guild so far, I was certain that he was going to prepare a rewarding position for me.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung nervously as he started talking again.

"First, I would like to appoint Mr. Lee Ki-Young as the sub guild master."

'I love you! Hyun-Sung!'

My eyes widened because this was what I was expecting. Actually, I didn't think that he was going to do this much for me.

'The second-in-command in Kim Hyun-Sung's kingdom.'

I knew he cared about me, but Kim Hyun-Sung thought highly of me more than I thought, so of course, I couldn't help but smile. I wanted to stand up and start dancing, but the announcement I heard after made me even happier.

"I would also like to appoint Mr. Lee Ki-Young as the guild's temporary treasurer."

Managing the guild's funds meant that I had a lot of power. Not only was I the sub guild master, but I was the treasurer as well. I knew I was going to be a little busy, but I could handle that much work.

"Recruiting people is the most important, so after creating a temporary personnel committee, Mr. Lee Ki-Young will be the chairman of that committee as well," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

I liked that too. Being able to recruit people that I liked certainly was an advantage.

"When we create a new dungeon strategy team, Mr. Lee Ki-Young will temporarily manage the team."

I realized that something was wrong…

"After establishing the guild's future strategy headquarters and the damage countermeasure committee, Mr. Lee Ki-Young will be the first chairman," he said.

'Wait.'

"I would also like to appoint Mr. Lee Ki-Young as the temporary senior administrative officer who will overlook the overall administrative affairs. He'll continue to be the overseer until the situation stabilizes."

'Stop.'

"After we create the pension strategy office, Mr. Lee Ki-Young will take the managerial position there."

'Stop it.'

"He'll also be temporarily in charge of the guild's marketing once we establish the public relations strategy team."

'Please stop it, you bastard!'

The problem was that Kim Hyun-Sung kept saying my name. Of course, he mentioned Hwang Jung-Yeon and Sun Hee-Young here and there, but he kept saying my name for strange jobs that didn't make sense to me. Even the others thought that it was strange at first but then they started to look at me as if they were pitying me. At this point, I became suspicious of whether Kim Hyun-Sung was trying to screw me over or not, so I didn't say anything else for now.

"I appoint Mr. Lee Ki-Young as the temporary chairman…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'I got it, so stop it already… '

A silent cry.

For the first time ever, I resented Kim Hyun-Sung.

CHAPTER 112
HURRY UP AND WORK! (2)

There was a story about King Sejong and Minister Hwang Hee. Hwang Hee requested to resign several times, but King Sejong didn't grant it, so he had to work until his dying breath. If people resigned due to health issues, then they were told to work from home and if they resigned because they were too old to work, then a palanquin would be sent so that they could be carried to the palace. To make things worse, King Sejong sent civil servants to Hwang Hee's house so that he could take care of the paperwork while in bed, so he basically worked until he died.

'Shit… '

I was in a similar situation. I realized that Kim Hyun-Sung was really trying to make me work. If Kim Hyun-Sung's kingdom grew bigger and his name went down in history, then I was sure that my name would be mentioned as well, but I would be described as an idiot that died from overworking.

Despite the many corruptions Hwang Hee was involved in, he received King Sejong's affection until the very end and just like Hwang Hee, I was able to obtain absolute power.

'Power.'

It was obvious, but my position within the guild had totally changed compared to before. It wasn't that I was in a low position before, but I was now in a position where I could wield the Blue Guild's power.

'The problem is that I don't have time to use that power… '

Currently, almost all the issues related to the guild required my attention. Out of all the positions that I was assigned to, the majority of them were temporary and even though there was no guarantee that they would remain temporary, I realized that knowing the Blue Guild's administrative system inside and out was very important. It meant that I could see all the matters happening within the guild and I realized once again that Kim Hyun-Sung had faith in me. He couldn't trust anybody else and

since the guild master trusted me wholeheartedly, it was natural for the other guild members to start groveling. Basically, my important titles gave me wings.

The second was gold coins. As if the Blue Guild was marketing that they weren't a black company[1] and was a kind guild that paid the members based on the amount of work they did, I had the highest salary in the guild. It was even higher than Kim Hyun-Sung, the guild master. When I first arrived here, my pay was one million gold and before even a year could pass, my pay had already increased almost 12 times. Since I was getting paid about 1.2 million when converted into won, I was definitely successful in my career, but the reality was that this salary wasn't enough.

The problem was that I wasn't getting paid consistently because the guild was falling apart and despite getting a raise, I couldn't accept the pay considering the guild's current situation. To make things worse, it wasn't the guildmembers but me that had to earn the money. The guild was in the worst situation possible; we were experiencing financial and manpower difficulties.

'I should take care of this first.'

No matter which one it was, I had to take care of it.

While I was reading the report in front of me, I heard a voice beside me.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young, this is the report from the damage task force," Park Joong-Ki said.

"Please leave it on my desk. I'll check it after I'm done with the current report. *Oh*, could you please call Miss Jung-Yeon for me?" I asked.

"Well… Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon said that she's taking care of other tasks…"

"What? She told me that she was going to rest…" I said.

"She said that something came up," he replied.

'She ran off.'

I shouldn't have trusted her when she said that she was going to take a break. Actually, it was understandable since she basically stayed here all day, and thanks to her help in organizing the documents, it made my job a lot easier. In a world without computers, I thought that using a talented woman like her only when I needed help

was the right thing to do, but I never even imagined that she would run away like this without saying a word. Of course, I could understand it since she probably had work she had to catch up on, but I felt like I was more miserable without her.

“The guild’s marketing…”

“As I mentioned before, we’ll first release an article saying that the Blue Guild’s administration has changed and then reveal the records regarding the capture of the Cursed Shrine. I would need the record in three days. Actually, I’ll do it again. After releasing the free section of the record, I think it would be best to sell the remaining section,” I explained.

“Are you suggesting that we sell part of the capture record?” Park Joong-Ki asked.

“Yes, we’ll sell it,” I answered.

“Then this should go to the business department…”

“No, you should just leave it. The business department has other tasks to take care of,” I said, interrupting him.

“Excuse me?” Park Joong-Ki asked.

The business department was part of my jurisdiction anyway and I guess they must have realized that because the guild employee looked at me pitifully.

“We may need to change things up a bit, but I’m sure it’ll be more than enough to sell because the story about the Cursed Shrine is pretty exciting,” I said.

“I think I know what you’re talking about,” he said.

“I think it’ll be best to include the story about Lee Seol-Ho before the group left even though it’ll have to be edited a bit. If there’s anyone within the guild that’s good at writing, I’ll gather all of them and ask them to start editing it. Actually, I’ll start right now,” I said.

“That’s a good idea, but… if you think about the publication and the mass production, it may take longer than you think, sub guild master,” he said.

“I’ll reschedule everything. In the article, we should also mention the items we

obtained from the Cursed Shrine along with the capture record. We should also include information about Juliena," I suggested.

"Are you referring to the legendary item you have?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

"Yes, and of course, we won't mention the functions of the weapon. Focus on the words, Possessor of Legendary Item, et cetera, and promote that. I'm sure it's the fastest and most effective way," I said.

"So they'll become more interested in how the dungeon was captured…"

"Yes."

After getting everyone's attention on how the legendary item was obtained, it would be better to reveal the capture records after. I thought that it was going to sell really well because the public was curious about a lot of things. They would want to know where the items were obtained and they would most certainly gossip about how I was acknowledged as the owner of a legendary item.

Despite coming up with the idea just now, I thought that it wasn't so bad because there weren't that many opportunities for people to hear about how someone else obtained a legendary item.

Not only that…

"We'll reschedule the delivery time for the Fantasy Potion and deliver it sooner. I'll make sure it's shipped out earlier because I think it'll be better if it's released at the same time when the capture records are being sold," I suggested.

"Okay, I'll change the schedule," he said.

There were other ways that we could use to promote the guild.

Since the potion was the main contributor while we were in the dungeon, I was certain that it would quickly be sold out. The plan wasn't bad and even though it felt like everything was working out, I felt like something was missing.

"Hm…"

"What's wrong?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

“It’s nothing,” I answered.

It felt like this wasn’t the right direction. Not only was I supposed to promote the guild’s merchandise, but I was supposed to promote the guild itself. If this continued, no matter how well things went, it would be nothing more than earning money. Of course, this alone could increase the guild’s worth…

However…

‘It doesn’t mean that they’ll want to work with the Blue Guild… ’

The plan lacked a decisive blow.

“By the way, how much does it cost to utilize a carriage billboard?” I asked.

“I heard 200 gold is the cheapest for one day, but for carriages that move in areas with a lot of people, the price is…”

“Not bad. It’s cost-effective and I like the fact that we can use it right away,” I said.

“How are you planning on…”

“I’ll have to think about it a bit more. By the way, are they done creating a list of all the epic-ranked items?” I asked.

“I heard that they’re almost done,” Park Joong-Ki answered.

“We don’t have a lot of time until the auction, so please ask them to hurry. We’ll sell all the useless items,” I told him.

“Okay.”

I didn’t want to acknowledge it, but the work wasn’t that bad. Since I was involved in every single matter, being able to adjust my schedule flexibly felt pretty nice. If this was an ordinary company, then we would have had several meetings just to reschedule something and people would have nitpicked everything and I would have already reached my limits. Since I controlled everything by myself, I didn’t have to worry about bureaucracy, but this didn’t mean that my current work wasn’t tiring at all.

The problem was that there were limits to my abilities. Since I was taking care of the tasks that many people usually handled, my head was starting to ache. If I had the same administrative power that characters had in novels, then I could have handled things without any issues and it would have made my job a lot easier, but the reality was that I didn't even know every imperial law. I didn't have a problem taking care of ordinary tasks, but when it came to sensitive tasks that involved taxes or imperial law, it took me more time to take care of it because I had to study while working.

'It's also taking me longer since I don't have anyone competent enough to help me… '

Honestly, this was the biggest problem. The Blue Guild wasn't a small guild. The guild was like an entertainment agency that revolved around seven parties and there was a good amount of guild members and staff that assisted them. Obviously, none of them were really competent which meant that those gramps must have killed the members that stood out even a little bit. I mean, I was sure that they didn't actually kill them, but they probably pressured those members to either leave the guild or had them kicked out before they climbed the ranks.

'They're useless even after death.'

It became painfully obvious how obsessed they were with their positions.

Since we didn't have people that could do the work, I had no choice but to do things on my own.

'Cheap labor.'

I was cheap and competent. What we needed was a cheap and competent labor force. The guild's image was what would bring those people in and it was the job of the marketing team to create an image for the guild. When looking at the guild's current situation, I was sure that only cheap people would apply to the guild for now because those that were truly competent wouldn't do so.

While I was thinking about whether it would be best to cheat people by creating a nice image for the Blue Guild, I heard someone knocking on the door. When I heard their voice, I knew that it was Park Deok-Gu.

"Hyung-nim, it's me."

"Come in, Deok-Gu," I said.

"*Ugh*… don't you think you're too busy?" he asked.

"Yeah, I *really* am busy," I answered.

"I came because the guild master asked me to give you something," he said.

"What is it?" I asked.

"He told me that it was a fatigue remedy…" he answered.

"*Oh*…"

'Kim Hyun-Sung, that bastard.'

At this point, Kim Hyun-Sung and I were probably enemies in our past lives and when I thought that I could possibly be Hwang Hee from the story, I felt a chill running down my spine.

"He was really worried about your health… I'm not sure where he got it from, but it's really effective. Taking one of these will keep you up for three days…" Park Deok-Gu explained.

The more he spoke, the more scared I felt…

'Don't be like this, you pig!'

If this continued, then I would end up getting sick one way or another. As if I was grasping at straws, I had no choice but to ask him for help.

'Being straightforward might be the best solution… '

"Deok-Gu, let's talk," I said.

When I spoke, I saw his eyes sparkling…

"About what?" he asked.

"What do you think about our guild's image?" I asked.

"I mean… isn't it a failed guild? We're still rebuilding it… and I'm sure it'll get better

in the future. It doesn't really seem so bad right now, *ahem*," he answered.

It was the perfect answer.

"Then what's our guild's strength?" I asked.

"Why are you asking…"

"I'm not asking seriously, so you can answer however you want. What should we say in order to bring competent people into our guild?" I asked.

"I don't know anything about that, but… if you're asking about our guild's strength, then we're all young, passionate, and ambitious. And you're here too, Hyung-nim! Yeah…" he said.

"*Oh*…"

I felt like I got an answer that I never even imagined. I was really puzzled by the fact that I hadn't been able to think of those simple things. When I smiled while looking at Park Deok-Gu, he must have realized that he had been helpful because he revealed a bright smile.

I immediately spoke to Park Joong-Ki who was sitting next to me. "Mr. Joong-Ki."

"Yes, sub guild master."

"Contact the transportation union in Lindel right now and make sure we can spread leaflets everywhere," I told him.

"Understood. Are you planning on expanding the numbers…"

"No, right now…"

"…"

"We need to recruit interns," I said.

I couldn't be the only one recruiting people.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_company_(Japanese_term) ☜

CHAPTER 113
HURRY UP AND WORK! (3)

"Interns?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

"Yes, interns," I answered.

Park Joong-Ki, who had been helping me with the task all this time, looked doubtful and I understood why he made that expression. I made a suggestion that we recruit interns while the guild was falling apart. I knew that he believed that no one would apply. But with our current state, it wasn't a bad decision. As long as the public and the press worked together, people would apply, and as long as we built a nice image for our guild…

'A young enterprise, a young guild!'

We could use venture companies as a reference and promote that the guild was a place where people were free and could be creative. Of course, the reality may be different, but it was important to at least seem that way on the outside. We needed new non-combatant staff members that were competent and wanted to work for the guild for a relatively small wage.

'That's why we need interns.'

"I think we should change the interior first," I suggested.

"Excuse me?"

"I think the office looks a bit plain and I'm sure the young people of Lindel aren't looking for a guild like this one. Let's get rid of all the desks and by using dyeing magic, we should color the interior blue," I said.

"That's… I don't really understand what you mean by changing the interior all of a sudden." Park Joong-Ki hesitated.

"What the Blue Guild needs is innovation and there's no way people would be able to

think of new ideas while working in an environment like this. The first thing we need to do is to provide a location that's great to work in and not just for us, but a place that others will want to work in," I explained.

"I… see. Got it," he said.

There wasn't a better word than innovation and I was sure that he knew what kind of tricks I was trying to play.

"We should also tear down the walls that are between offices, so let's start by tearing down the walls of the offices that Lee Seol-Ho and the other gramps used. I'm sure it'll be better if the offices were more open. We should also place a large sofa that the staff can lie down on. Actually, wait, let's add sleeping capsules so that people can take afternoon naps, but instead of buying new ones, let's use the ones that we have. This way, we can minimize the impact on the budget. What's important is the atmosphere, got it? It's important that we become a guild that's free and active so that the younger members can have dreams. No, we need to at least *look* like that kind of guild." I explained.

"Regardless of if it's a pool table or a card game, we need to put something in the break room that the staff will use during their break time. Oh, a chess board might not be so bad since it's not that expensive anyway. Additionally, let's change the guild's cafeteria into a buffet." I suggested.

"The budget for the cafeteria is…"

A servant that ate well would work better. I was ignorant about anything else, but a place like the cafeteria where the guild members and staff often go needed an improvement.

'It's really different compared to the executive cafeteria.'

"If we get rid of the useless luxuries that the gramps previously used, I'm sure it'll be enough," I said.

"It still won't be enough. How much of an improvement are you thinking?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

I had no choice but to think about it for a bit, but the answer was quite simple.

“From now on, the Blue Guild will no longer spend money to keep up a certain standard of appearance and we’ll also stop spending money every month on party and executive benefits. Afterward, we can just use part of the money we have remaining,’ I told him.

It was better to use that money on the servants.

‘Forget about keeping up with appearances.’

The pay that the executives and the party members were receiving should be enough to maintain the guild’s appearance, so it was ridiculous for them to receive even more pay that was separate from their wage. I knew for sure that if it weren’t for the old forces, then the Blue Guild would have been a much larger guild by now.

“The expenses spent on the guild master, the sub guild master, and the diplomatic executives will remain the same, but we’ll reduce their pay by 30 percent,” I said.

I had the heart of a corrupt official because I honestly still wanted to get paid and since I went out often, I was sure that I would be spending a lot of money. It wasn’t rationalization but the truth.

I felt burdened by the way Park Joong-Ki was looking at me, so I quickly continued. “We won’t have a set lunchtime so that people can eat whenever they want without worrying about the time. They can eat whatever they want and this applies to the current guild staff members as well. Please make a separate announcement tomorrow morning,” I requested.

“Okay.”

“We’ll open up all the amenities that were only available to the executives as well,” I added.

“Excuse me? But aren’t those a bit too small for everyone in the guild to use?” Park Joong-Ki asked.

“Have them make reservations, but party members and executives will be given priority when making the reservation since the facilities were made for them to use. It won’t do us any good if no one uses them and when we go out to expeditions, no one will be using them anyway,” I explained.

'Effectively, at the least… '

"I understand," he said.

"We'll manage a class where normal guild members and guild staff members can study magic, swordsmanship, or even the imperial law. Miss Jung-Yeon can teach magic… and if Miss Lee Sang-Hee agrees… actually, I'll tell Miss Lee Sang-Hee myself," I said.

"Okay."

"How much do you think the budget will be?" I asked.

I slowly started to calculate as I asked the question, but I knew for sure that it wasn't going to cost that much. For any task that required labor, Park Deok-Gu could take care of it and when considering the money that the gramps had used to maintain the guild's appearance, we may have some money left after all these.

'This is the right thing to do since we're going to work the interns… '

It was less expensive to spend money on employee benefits than to spend money on interns that would work for a year for free. It was the best situation since we could use the slaves while boasting about trivial things, so it was unreasonable to think about loss and profit.

"Actually, you don't need to calculate it. After thinking about it, I think it'll be fine. We'll work overtime separately in our rooms, so all of you can go back and if there are any documents that I need to review, please bring them to my room, Mr. Joong-Ki," I told him.

"What? Right now?" he asked.

"Yes, we'll begin the construction right now," I answered.

"The guild master's authorization…"

…wasn't needed.

"I don't need the master's authorization and I'll tell him about this later on," I explained.

"*Oh…* okay," he said.

Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who said that trivial matters wouldn't require his authorization because he thought that it was a lot more effective to execute those *trivial* matters than wasting time creating a report that needed his authorization. Since there were tasks he needed to do as a guild master, it was a good choice for him to put more focus on those for now.

"Let's get started," I said.

"Okay."

When patted Park Deok-Gu's back whose eyes were widened, he nodded as well.

The construction proceeded very quickly, just as I wanted. We used a lot of people for simple labor. We hired cheap technicians from Lindel's union and called the artists from the plaza that were wasting their talents since this would be an opportunity for them to fulfill their dreams instead of drawing other people's faces for a few pieces of gold. The empty space was starting to fill with the artists' work who wanted to promote themselves for free and not only that but there were even people that offered to donate the works they weren't selling. I didn't know much about art, but the artists that drew pictures or sold sculptures for 40 to 50 gold all had bright smiles on their faces.

'It's hard for artists to make money in this world.'

Park Deok-Gu was having fun breaking down the walls of the gramps' office while doing other work and since I thought that it wouldn't be bad to use him, I accepted a lot of his opinions. He wasn't the type that enjoyed using his brain, but since he was interested in changing the environment, my plan was moving along quite smoothly.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young, what should we do with the remaining space?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

"What are our child care benefits like?" I asked.

"We do have welfare, but…" he answered.

"In that case, I think it would be good if we build a daycare within the guild. If there's anyone that worked as a nursery teacher back on earth, please let me know. How

many households have families in the guild?" I asked.

"There's three," he answered.

"That's not much," I commented.

"People tend to be reluctant about marriage…" he said.

If the parents pledged their loyalty to a guild, then it was most likely that their child would have to do the same. What I needed were slaves that would pledge their entire lives to the guild, not temporary ones. It would be best to check the childcare and maternity leave system and get rid of the old ways of kicking out a woman just because they were pregnant.

I felt like the guild was changing dramatically all of a sudden, but no one seemed confused by it because all of this was good news to the existing members, and of course, we couldn't forget about promoting to the public that our guild had changed. Not only did we have to contact the Lindel Daily Report, but we also had to come up with a billboard design to give to the transportation union.

The title would be…

[Blue Guild, the Dream Job, and Guild!]

Or…

[We Have Totally Changed. A Guild Staff Member Lists 23 Reasons Why Working In the Blue Guild is the Dream Job!]

There was a limit to this, but the staff benefits and the atmosphere that was constantly improving; a workplace where everyone can laugh and the opportunity to develop one's individual ability were the qualities that could convince a few people to join.

After some time had passed, I was very satisfied with how the guild looked. Of course, there were some parts that were lacking, but I believe that showing that side

was beneficial because people would see that weren't perfect. Being too perfect wasn't a good thing.

"Word of mouth is the most important, so please continue training the guild members. Public opinion is more important than the press. After you get off work, send the guild members to the bar and pay for their dinners, but considering our situation, I'll have to set a limit on how much can be spent on dinner," I said.

"Really?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

"Yes, go have fun with them, but don't let it interfere with your work the next day," I warned him.

"*Oh,* okay. I understand," he replied.

"Innovation is important, so I think it's best to continue planting this image in their heads and that image is of a young guild and innovation. That's the image we're going to display to the public. Besides dinner, we'll also support various activities so the members can continue to develop themselves, but this applies to you as well, Mr. Joong-Ki. Your agility stat looks good, so it'll be unfortunate to let that go to waste," I explained.

"*Oh,* thank you."

"By the way, why is it that you haven't been wearing the guild insignia?" I asked.

"*Huh? Oh…* I was told that only executives and party members were allowed to wear it…" he answered.

"*Ha*… those crazy gramps…" I mumbled.

"Excuse me?"

"It's nothing. From now on, ordinary guild and staff members will wear the insignia and when we go out, everyone will have to wear it because you guys are the face of the guild. I'm saying this just in case, but if the members cause trouble outside of the guild, then it'll be on their heads and this is not just a simple threat. I'll really have their heads, so please keep that in mind. I also won't allow anyone to look dirty. I don't expect everyone to wear a uniform, but please make sure that everyone looks as neat as possible," I explained.

“Got it. Th-Thank you,” he stuttered.

“I’m not sure what you’re thankful about since it’s common sense,” I said.

My plan was going smoothly and even the surveys weren’t that bad. By taking care of the members that were still in the guild and changing the atmosphere, they started to promote the guild, so the public opinion about us was very good. Despite the fact that we weren’t recruiting people just yet, we were getting a lot of inquiries and soon, I was sure that we would have to reveal the inside of the guild and information about joining us by using the press.

The fact that work efficiency had increased during all of this was surprising. Whenever I went outside, I heard people talking about the Blue Guild, so I was certain that people were waiting to apply, and as more time passed, the public would naturally focus on our guild. Of course, they would look at us positively, not negatively.

The issues that happened before this all became part of the past and the people’s minds changed from ‘would the Blue Guild be able to recover’ to ‘I want to join the Blue Guild.’ Moreover, since the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild were our partners from the beginning, they started to offer their support, so we became a young guild that possessed a lot of funds. The gramps that caused problems were forgotten altogether.

The part that I liked the most was the work of the staff members and if it wasn’t for their organized movements, then the rumors wouldn’t have spread within Lindel so fast.

The guild members had no idea that the free dinners were an extension of work. Not only that, but the guides that were part of large guilds started to take interest in the Blue Guild, so I was sure that they could feel just how thorough the training in the Blue Guild was. The worst part of all of this was that I started to like the guild members that I didn’t like before.

‘They have been submitting their reports on time… ’

They rarely made the stupid mistakes that they had made before and even though they couldn’t be called competent slaves yet, I was still satisfied by the fact that they were working hard.

I had to take care of different tasks while focusing on public opinion. Even though I endured it as much as I could, we had reached the point where it was difficult to manage the guild's empty positions with just a few members, so I had no choice but to post a recruitment announcement while feeling a bit anxious.

[Blue Guild Internship Recruitment Announcement]

[We're looking for people that'll become a new family member of the Blue Guild. May become an official guild member!]

After watching the people's reactions nervously, they reacted a lot better than I thought.

"The Blue Guild is recruiting."

"I told you that they were going to do so."

"Are they recruiting for their combat force as well?"

"*Oh…*"

It was to the point that Lindel became noisy.

CHAPTER 114
HURRY UP AND WORK! (4)

Lindel became noisy and it was worth it to put our focus on innovation, and I was sure that these people were used to the Blue Guild's current system. A dream company that considered the comfort of their employees with many additional benefits. Even the people back on Earth probably dreamed of joining a company like this, but it didn't take long for them to realize that the benefits that should naturally be offered weren't necessarily offered in other guilds.

The many professional managers that studied business administration knew what kind of company talented people would apply to, but *knowing* and *doing* were two different things. The majority of the companies that I knew didn't carry out the methods that they knew because of their selfish greed or maybe it was because they had slaves lined up and overworking them wasn't really an issue or there could be an internal issue within the company. It was also possible that the company didn't have enough funds or the company was in a bad situation to the point that they couldn't recruit people. Earth was filled with smart people and there wasn't a single company that took care of their employees like we did and it was even more true in Lindel where danger was a norm. Large guilds like the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild were in a good position, but for the other small to mid-sized clans, their reality was basically hell.

My actions from the beginning couldn't be considered innovative because using interns wasn't exactly the greatest idea, but there was fair compensation, which would make them work even harder.

'As long as they become full-time staff members.'

This possibility would make the slaves work even harder. If I had to explain, the word 'innovation' was basically sugarcoating and using word play about the job. Once the image had been planted into everyone's brains, it would become fixed and every time that there was a change within the Blue Guild, our followers would become parrots that would shout the word, 'innovation.'

'Our image is important.'

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that creating an image through public opinion and the press would influence everything about the guild.

I heard a voice while tapping my finger on the desk.

"There are only a few successful candidates," Park Joong-Ki said.

"I guess it'll take some time," I said.

"It will. Despite the fact that a lot of people got disqualified during the first test, there are still a lot of them here. It's great that there are a lot more competent candidates than we thought, but… maybe you should meet them separately…"

"No, I'll see them all myself," I said, cutting him off.

It would be more comfortable that way since I would be able to see their status windows.

"I'm worried that you're overworking yourself," he said.

"I'm fine. They'll be working for the guild, so it's best if I see them myself," I told him.

"As expected…" he commented.

"It won't take long anyway."

It was easy to weed out people. There was nothing more effective than a test when weeding out the random Tom, Dick, and Harry. I decided that giving a test about imperial law or tax management was good enough and the people that applied to the alchemy planning department should be given a test about alchemy, which turned out to be effective.

We blocked the people that came here simply because of the rumor. The unfortunate part was that there were candidates that were eliminated because of a mistake that they had made at that moment, but sadly, we didn't have the time to take care of them. The most important thing for us right now was to have people that could work right away.

"Have all the candidates gathered for an interview?" I asked.

“Yes,” Park Joong-Ki answered.

“Please send them in one by one and I’ll be the only one doing the interview,” I told him.

“Okay, I understand,” he said.

As soon as I sat on the chair, a nervous-looking man entered the room and he looked as if he had to go to the bathroom. I guess he didn’t know that I was going to be the one doing the interview. I could understand why he had that kind of expression since he was doing an interview with a powerful man in the city.

When I smiled lightly and checked his status window, his overall stats were low and his nature…

‘A lazy egoist.’

I believed that I had to weed out people like him because if they got caught by Sun Hee-Young, they would simply become dust. Looking at the document in front of me, his experience wasn’t that bad, but people like him would end up becoming a cancer within the guild and there was no reason for me to bring back those crazy gramps. I was sure that he was one of the people that wanted to take advantage of the guild’s benefits after becoming a full-time staff member after a year.

“Mr. Kim Chul-Soo?” I called out.

“Yes, it’s nice to meet you,” he said.

“*Oh,* no need for an introduction since it’ll be different from your normal interview. You applied for the crisis response team…” I said.

“Yes, I did. I’m not sure if you heard, but I was the team leader for a short period of time at the Guardian Tree Clan,” he explained.

“Oh, I see. I’ve heard it before. That’s pretty impressive,” I said.

Guardian Tree my ass! I had never even heard of it so it was possible that it was one of the clans that had suddenly disappeared. Even though his eyes were filled with passion, the system wouldn’t lie about his nature.

When I glanced at him and spoke, he looked slightly embarrassed.

“I’ll ask you a simple question.”

“Sure.”

“Please design an evacuation plan in the event that a disaster sweeps across Lindel,” I said.

“Right now?” he asked.

“Yes, it doesn’t have to be perfect. You need to evacuate all the citizens of Lindel, so if it were you, how would you evacuate the people?” I asked.

“Well… I… I believe using magic first is the best thing to do…”

He was rambling, but it was far from the answer I had in mind.

‘Idiot.’

The way he answered my question without knowing what kind of disaster was happening was amusing to watch. Because of his nature, I was already looking at him with a judgemental look and honestly, I didn’t like this candidate.

“Lindel’s third castle gate is…”

“Okay, thank you for that. It was a satisfactory interview, so you can leave now,” I told him.

“*Oh…* okay. Thank you,” he said.

“We’ll let you know if you passed the interview. Your answer was impressive. Thank you for your time,” I said.

“*Oh!* Th-Thank you,” he stuttered.

As long as the perfect candidate still hadn’t appeared, then it wouldn’t be a bad idea to use him for a year. After he left with a smile as if he had given me the correct answer, the next person entered the room.

"*Hm…*"

The woman looked pretty neat on the outside, but the wounds all over her body showed that she went through a lot.

'She looks old too… '

When I looked at her status window, I saw information about her.

'Her name is Kim Mi-Young, age is 39 and her nature is a hard-working lawyer.'

Her intelligence wasn't bad and even her magic stat was 30. Even her experience looked interesting. She previously worked in a mid-sized guild and retired when she turned 30. After getting married, she opened a small general store in the plaza… but there wasn't anything written after that. I had an idea about what kind of life she lived, so it wouldn't be bad to hear her story.

"Miss Kim Mi-Young."

"Yes?"

"You applied for the imperial legal department," I said.

"I did."

"Your background is pretty interesting, so could you tell me about them like how it's written here? You got married… and you took a pretty long break. You were on break for five years," I pointed out.

"Yes… I did," she said.

I noticed how her face turned serious and I was certain that she felt uncomfortable talking about it. As such, I thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to ask her a question.

"About your husband…"

"He passed away," she answered.

"I see. I'm sorry for your loss. Do you have any children?" I asked.

“I have two, but it won’t affect my work,” she said quickly.

“I guess you were treated unfairly in your previous guild,” I said.

“…”

I could imagine how she got this far. While working at the guild, I was sure that she met her husband, got married, and had kids almost at the same time. After feeling a lot of pressure, she must have left the guild and started a business with the money that they had saved, but when the business wasn’t doing so well, her husband must have gone out to hunt. It was none of my business whether he died because of a disease or because of his injuries after a hunt, but it was most likely that she had a hard time getting by after her husband died. She couldn’t apply for a job at other guilds and clans because she had kids to take care of and since she had taken a long break, guilds started avoiding her. I wasn’t sure how she raised her kids by herself, but I was confident that it must have been difficult. Whether she was doing odd jobs, physical labor, or day labor, I was certain that the days she spent were unimaginably difficult.

“Not only did I try different jobs during my break, but I did various activities and worked on developing my abilities,” she said.

That was a lie…

“I see.”

But I didn’t have any reason to care about it because she was the type of talented person that I had in mind.

‘This is great.’

The fact that she had children could be seen as a flaw, but if we helped her with her children, then she could become a slave that would pledge her loyalty to the guild. Moreover, her smart children would also become workers for our guild. Her flaw was that she had taken a long break, but she could quickly adapt to things by working and above all, I liked her nature.

‘Being hard-working is a good thing.’

Mothers were strong and they were stronger than I imagined.

“Do you think that you’ll be able to actively serve?” I asked.

“Yes, of course. I continued studying while taking a break and I have a level 1 certificate in imperial law. I’ll probably have to update it, but… I should be able to handle the necessary tasks,” she answered.

“I’m sure you know the current situation of our guild,” I said.

“I do…”

“Could you tell me why you decided to apply for the imperial legal department?” I asked.

After a short silence, Kim Mi-Young started talking. “I thought that you needed people who are knowledgeable in imperial law and considering the recent event that the Blue Guild had experienced, I thought you’d make a formal complaint to Celia even though the imperial law doesn’t permit disputes with other free cities. Of course, this is under the condition that the Blue Guild has proof,” she explained.

“I see. If we don’t have proof, what would you do?” I asked.

“I can think of a way to put pressure on Celia that won’t go against the law. Just like modern laws have loopholes, I’m sure the imperial law also has loopholes,” she answered.

“Is there a way?”

She lightly nodded without answering. This was probably her way of saying that we should hire her if I wanted to know more and I kind of liked that.

“I see. *Hmm,* it’s interesting. Actually, I like it. I like it a lot,” I commented.

“…”

“I think we should work together,” I said.

“Excuse me?” she asked.

“I’m saying that I’m going to hire you. I’m sure you know already, but you’ll have to work for a year without pay, but that doesn’t mean that we won’t be paying you at all.

I guess you can say that you're a special case, so we'll at least provide you with basic living expenses, and later on, we can discuss your pay. *Oh!* If it's okay with you, I want you to be the team leader of the legal team, but… that's only possible if you show results while you're still an intern," I explained.

"Sorry?"

"You can leave your children at the daycare in the guild when you come to work. Where do you currently live?" I asked.

"Well… it's on the outskirts…"

I guess she must be living in the slums, but that shouldn't be a problem since it was a lot better for me if she didn't have any place to go.

"It would be best if you lived in the guild house, so I'll provide a room for you and your children," I said.

"*Oh…"*

When I searched under the desk and threw her the employment contract, she looked at the document with a dumbfounded face. I was certain that she knew better than me and that she was more knowledgeable in this field.

"You just need to read it over and sign it," I said.

"*Oh,* okay…"

Kim Mi-Young was reading through the contract slowly and it didn't take long for her serious face to turn into a bright smile.

"You'll be busy and I'm telling you this ahead of time, but you won't be able to see your children for a few days. Of course, the guild will provide you with everything you need and that includes education and future career advancement. If you provide good results, we may be willing to send your children to study abroad in the capital of the empire, but this is under the condition that your children join the Blue Guild. It's written in the contract, Miss Mi-Young," I explained.

"*Oh…* yes, okay!" she answered excitedly.

“If you or your children want to receive training as an adventurer, the guild provides basic swordsmanship and magic classes, so the three of you can attend them if you wish,” I told her.

“Thank you. Th-Thank you very much,” she stuttered while expressing her gratitude.

There wasn’t a reason for her not to sign the employment contract because living here was more advantageous than living in the slums. Actually, if she cared a lot about her children, then she had to sign the contract no matter what. Living in the comfortable Blue Guild was better than living in the slums where anybody could come in at any time. It didn’t take her long to sign the contract with a calm expression. I couldn’t help but smile.

“Then when do I start…”

“Right now,” I told her.

“Excuse me?” she asked.

“Go to the guild lobby and after finding a person named Park Deok-Gu, you can come to the guild house with your children. You can clean up your belongings and after going to your office, you can rewrite the employment contract you’re holding since I’m not very knowledgeable when it comes to the law. I wrote it by referencing the previous contract, but it still sounds strange,” I explained.

“*Oh…*”

“Please finish it before you’re done for the day and hand it over to me, Miss Mi-Young,” I told her.

Kim Mi-Young looked at me as if she was asking if she had made a mistake, but it soon became clear that she didn’t have a choice and her slightly happy face was proof of that.

“Okay!” she said excitedly.

Ideally, when using workers, it was best that they had no idea that they were slaves.

I couldn’t help but smile when I saw her determined expression.

'Let's do this.'

"If you show satisfactory results, then you'll become a full-time staff member without having to work as an intern for a year, but your results have to be satisfactory," I told her.

"Okay, I'll do my best," she said.

CHAPTER 115
HURRY UP AND WORK! (5)

The interview ended really well and what was surprising was that there were more people like Kim Mi-Young than I thought. Of course, I had no reason to avoid them. It was because I thought that desperate slaves would do a better job than those that weren't desperate. I did give strange questions to some people because I had no intention of hiring them from the start and they seemed dejected. They were questions that I couldn't even come up with an answer for, so it was understandable for them to react that way.

'All the members of the Blue Guild are drowning. Who would you save first and why?'

'All the guilds in Lindel commissioned you to clean the guild. How much should you charge and consider an appropriate amount?'

'You and your comrades are exploring a dungeon. If one of them had to die during the expedition, would you participate in the dungeon control or not?'

'How would you explain alchemy to your five-year-old child?'

It was those types of questions. They were ridiculous questions with the goal of creating an innovative image and it didn't really matter since those questions were for the people that I was going to eliminate, but there were people that had changed my mind because they gave decent answers. Of course. I simply referenced the interview questions that famous companies on Earth gave, but it was pretty effective.

'As expected from the Blue Guild!'

This was the kind of reaction we got. There were public opinions that criticized us about how we were imitating an innovative company when we were a guild that was falling apart, but we had created a dream job that everyone wanted, so it helped in

covering up those criticisms. The process after the interview was crucial as well.

“Please set up a separate interview for the people that got eliminated,” I requested.

“What kind of interview?” Park Joong-Ki asked.

“I’m sure they’re curious about why they got eliminated. You just need to skim through the resume and give a generic answer. *Oh,* and make sure to include something like thank you for your support or whatever. I’m sure that’ll really comfort them,” I explained.

“Okay, I understand,” he said.

“Great.”

A beautiful guild that even took care of the candidates that were eliminated. It was a different move from the other guilds that made people go back home without knowing the reason why they got eliminated and of course, I didn’t forget to use my best friend, the press.

[How is the Blue Guild different?]

This was the title of the interview style article that was published and the public’s reaction was so great that I couldn’t help but be flustered. The followers of innovation and the innovation parrots had started to spread their wings and naturally, this was being done in order to create an image that would leave a positive impression on the combatant jobs interview that was going to be held after the non-combatant jobs interview. At this point, the *maybe* traitors that had abandoned the Blue Guild after the incident started to contact us again. Of course, we refused their request to rejoin the guild.

‘We don’t need migrants.’

Rather than working with people who liked to jump to different places, it was better to hire a few more lovely workers.

It seemed like the new slaves liked the Blue Guild and even though they were quite busy, they enjoyed the facilities within the guild and were working hard because of these. They knew that they would receive a reward if they showed results and this simple mindset was like adding fuel to the flame for Kim Mi-Young and the other workers. After adapting to their jobs, they started working to the point that the existing staff members even felt threatened by them and that created a strange competitive tension within the guild.

Everything was going smoothly and despite that…

'I feel like I'm going to die.'

The fact that I was *very* busy was undeniable. My daily routine was simple. I didn't know the reason, but Jung Ha-Yan was still in bed and by giving the excuse that I was going to visit her, I would sleep in her hospital room. If I didn't do that, at the least, then my body would have probably collapsed by now and it was to the point that I even fell asleep while lying down next to her. I couldn't help but comfort myself by thinking that Jung Ha-Yan would like this if she was awake, but on the other hand, I was sure that I would be embarrassed once she woke up and saw me like this.

After the short break, I would visit the workshop and start researching the fantasy potion that was going to be released as a product. The new alchemy planning department was working hard, but to be honest, they didn't have that much work to do. In contrast, I still had a lot of work to do. Moreover, those that were still in their second jobs weren't competent enough to be called researchers.

After that, I would have a meeting, organize the guild, and give detailed work instructions. I would give Hwang Jung-Yeon a little more work and then spend some time resenting Kim Hyun-Sung.

Next, I would plan flexible promotional strategies, make plans for the future, take turns working in the imperial legal affairs, and do some personnel management planning for the combatant members. Right now, it was better for me to take care of the tasks that the interns couldn't do.

Of course, I also had to spend time organizing the things that needed authorization from the hateful Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Kim Hyun-Sung… that bastard…"

When I unknowingly mumbled my thoughts, I heard a voice beside me.

“Sorry?”

“It’s nothing, Miss Mi-Young. I heard you’ve been doing well recently,” I said.

“Thank you, sub guild master,” she replied.

“How are your children doing?” I asked.

“Th-They’re having a good time thanks to you. I-I don’t know what to say… thank you very much,” she said.

‘I’m more thankful… ’

The fact that I was able to hire such a competent worker in exchange for taking care of her children was a very beautiful thing and out of all the people that I hired so far, Kim Mi-Young was the best worker. During the interview, I said this without thinking much about it, but after a year, I was confident that Kim Mi-Young would really become a team leader.

“I should be the one thanking you for joining our guild,” I told her.

“Thank you and here’s the…”

“*Oh,* thank you for your hard work. You can go home now,” I said.

“But the revision…”

“I actually have to visit the guild master right now to get authorization and you also need to spend time with your children from time to time,” I said.

“*Oh,* thank you,” she said.

When I patted her shoulder, I noticed her blushing.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” I told her.

“Okay, sub guild master,” Kim Mi-Young said.

After she left, I organized the documents and stood up. The tasks that I thought I couldn't take care of needed the authorization of the most powerful person in the guild. Basically, getting authorization for things that had high risk was the right thing to do. It happened while I was slowly heading to the office while having various thoughts.

"*Huh?*"

I saw the guild members of the Red Mercenary Guild. They were the ones that Cha Hee-Ra had ordered to stay beside me in case someone else tried to assassinate me. Before I could think about why they were here, though, one of them started talking.

"It has been a while."

"Yes, it has been a while. What brings you here?" I asked.

"The master is here," they answered.

"Hee-Ra noona?"

"Yes. She's currently talking with Kim Hyun-Sung, the guild master of the Blue Guild," they said.

Just then, the office door started opening and it happened so fast that it felt like she knew I was here. Inside the office, I saw Cha Hee-Ra, whom I haven't seen in a while, and for some reason, I couldn't get used to her smiling face.

"You're here, honey," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"Noona?" I asked.

"Good thing you're here. We were actually talking about you…" she said.

"Please come in, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Okay."

I wasn't sure what was going on, but naturally, I felt anxious. Usually, Cha Hee-Ra wouldn't talk alone with Kim Hyun-Sung because negotiations with the Blue Guild were often done through me. Of course, having a meeting with Kim Hyun-Sung

wasn't strange at all since he was the guild master now, but seeing his uneasy expression made me really nervous.

'Did something happen?'

I had seen many faces on our hateful regressor's face, but I had never seen that kind of expression from him. It was like he had lost everything and the strange part was that Cha Hee-Ra looked fine, no, she looked really happy.

"Did something happen?" I asked.

Since I didn't know what was going on, it was natural for me to feel anxious. While I was reading their expressions, Kim Hyun-Sung said, "Nothing happened, however, we were talking about the meeting."

"Is it an important meeting?" I asked.

"It is. I'm not sure if you've heard of it, actually, it would probably be best to explain from the beginning. There isn't a reason for us to know about this yet, but every year in the Holy Empire of Benigoa, they hold an event and invite all the guild masters of large guilds that are within the free cities. It's basically a social event," he said.

"I see."

I had heard of it before and although I couldn't remember the details, I remember hearing it from Cha Hee-Ra and naturally, it had nothing to do with us. Large guilds like the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild were the ones that would be invited and the Blue Guild was no different from the guilds that had just started on their journey as a guild. But after seeing Cha Hee-Ra's expression, I had an idea as to what she was going to say and she spoke as if she was waiting for it. "Naturally, my guild and the Black Swan Guild have received an invitation from the Holy Empire."

"*Oh…*"

"The Mercenary Queen has submitted an official request to take you to this meeting, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's more like a desperate favor than a request," she said.

"*Oh!*"

'Boombayah!'

It only took a moment for me to realize what happened and why Kim Hyun-Sung looked so depressed.

'Shit! I love you, Hee-Ra noona!'

I didn't need anything else. The important thing was that I finally got the chance to escape this hell called 'work' and it was to the point that I started to feel affectionate toward Cha Hee-Ra. Not only was it difficult for me to suppress my urge to kiss her luscious red hair, but I couldn't even hide my smile.

"I… see…" I said.

I tried to stay calm, but it was difficult. Just imagining me going to the capital of the Holy Empire and leisurely enjoying the party with Cha Hee-Ra made me want to jump in joy. I desperately wanted to take a break.

'Hee-Ra noona… '

"The situation in the guild may become difficult since Mr. Ki-Young is currently in charge of all the operations in the guild, but… I'm sure it'll be helpful to him if he visits the capital and socializes with other people," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked really miserable while talking. Even though I wasn't overconfident in my abilities, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that it was because of me that the guild was currently operating smoothly. It was equivalent to exchanging a human named Lee Ki-Young for work and it was obvious how the guild was going to turn out without me here. The major tasks would fall on the guild master.

'Justice prevails!'

Naturally, Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't want to send me away, but considering the fact that this was the chance for me to enter the high society, it wasn't a bad exchange and that was the reason why he felt conflicted about this.

"The Mercenary Queen did say that she wouldn't take you if you rejected her offer…"

"I'll gladly go with her," I said, cutting him off.

“Okay… I’m sure that’s the right choice,” he said.

This kind of request was something we should approve considering the fact that the Red Mercenary Guild had always been helping us. Of course, I wasn’t just doing this because I wanted to hand over all my work to Kim Hyun-Sung.

“Then has it been decided, Mr. Hyun-Sung?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Yes. We should be the one thanking you for this opportunity since it’s not every day that we get this kind of opportunity, Miss Cha Hee-Ra,” he said.

“You look pretty depressed for someone who’s thankful.” She pointed out.

“It’s only natural since Mr. Ki-Young is in charge of many things in the guild… *haha.* I’m getting a headache on how I should handle the tasks in Mr. Ki-Young’s absence,” he said.

‘What do you mean? You just need to do the work for me… ’

Justice would prevail no matter what and this was the moment that made me realize that fact.

‘Keep up the good work, husband.’

I was done being the wife that did all the work and I thought it was time for the wife to start enjoying life, even if it was only for a moment.[1]

* * *

“Hey, is noonim okay, Hee-Young noonim?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Yes. I’m not exactly sure why she isn’t waking up, but there’s nothing wrong with her body,” she answered.

“…”

“It’s a relief to hear that she’s healthy, but I’m worried about the fact that she’s still in a coma… but seeing how she’s breathing, I guess she really is healthy.” He pointed out.

“You don’t have to worry because she’s really healthy,” Sun Hee-Young said.

“…”

“By the way, have you heard? Hyung-nim is going to the imperial capital or something like that,” he said.

“Yes. The guild is in a state of emergency because of that. He’s going to be away for a while, right?” she asked.

“I think so and I think he’s going with that Mercenary Queen. I hope that fox-like lady doesn’t hurt hyung-nim…”

“No!”

“*Huh?*”

“Miss Ha-Yan?”

“Pl-Please tell me the details!” Jung Ha-Yan shouted desperately.

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1. The Korean used for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ were 바깥양반 and 안사람 which is a very Korean expression. 바깥양반 is a husband who works outside, you wouldn’t call a house-husband a 바깥양반. 안사람 is directly translated to be ‘person inside’ referring to ‘wife’ since usually, wives stayed at home while husbands worked outside. ☜

CHAPTER 116
TO THE CAPITAL (1)

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan is awake."

It was the news that I heard after Cha Hee-Ra left the guild. Jung Ha-Yan, who had been asleep for a long time finally woke up. The timing was a bit strange, but I would be lying if I said I wasn't happy. After all, I could still vividly remember the moment she protected me and even though it was kind of funny, I missed Jung Ha-Yan.

'She went through a lot… '

It wasn't that I fell in love with her or anything, but it was true that I had grown fond of her. Of course, it wasn't the feeling of a lover, but even birds and beasts knew what gratitude was. It was inevitable that I would become fond of her since she saved my life.

"I should go visit her real quick," I said.

"Okay," Park Joong-Ki said.

"I'll make sure to finish the transition of my work to the guild master by the end of today. After you're both done with your work, please look over the tasks I assigned you, Mr. Joong-Ki and Miss Mi-Young," I told them.

"Okay."

After patting the shoulders of Park Joong-Ki and Kim Mi-Young, who were going to work together with Kim Hyun-Sung, I quickly walked out. Soon enough, I saw Jung Ha-Yan's hospital room. Seeing how it was quiet inside, I was probably the first one here.

"Ha-Yan," I called out.

"Oh. O… oppa," she stammered.

Even though I visited her every day, it had been a while since I saw her awake. She looked the same as before, but if there was one thing that was different about her, it was that she looked slightly discouraged. She looked as if she was scared of something and I immediately realized why she looked that way.

'It's probably because… '

It was probably because of the abusive language she heard before she became unconscious. I recall cursing at her and yelling at her to move away, so I could understand why she was like this. She probably thought that I hated her. I was sure that it had been a chaotic moment for Jung Ha-Yan as well, but I was certain that she still remembered what I said. She was probably still a little bit scared of it.

I felt a bit embarrassed about thanking her in this awkward situation.

'It's awkward.'

Jung Ha-Yan probably felt the same way, but that was the moment when I realized that I didn't need to force myself to talk. When I quietly opened my arms, Jung Ha-Yan jumped into me like a cat jumping toward a mouse.

"*Heuuuk*… oppa, I sorry… *heuk*," she said.

"It's fine. Thank you and I'm sorry," I told her.

"Oppaaaaa," she said while crying.

She must have thought that this was her chance because she buried and rubbed her face against my chest. Usually, I would feel a bit scared by her actions, but for some reason, she looked cute and seeing her healthier than before made me realize that I had been worried for no reason. I felt embarrassed because she seemed like she didn't want to get off of me.

"It was really painful, right?" I asked.

When I stroked her injured back, she shook her head, but it was natural for me to be worried that she still had some injuries.

'She doesn't have any injuries… '

Jung Ha-Yan must have thought that I was going to do something because she looked back at me while blushing and leaning her body against me. Her actions embarrassed me a bit. Obviously, it wasn't my intention to do a thorough inspection on her back. After I pulled down her shirt, I noticed the disappointed look on Jung Ha-Yan's face.

"It's a relief that you're doing fine," I said.

"*Um…* th-thank you for worrying about me, oppa," she said.

"Of course, I was worried about you. Don't do that next time, Ha-Yan," I told her.

"Okay…"

"I don't want to see you getting hurt," I said.

"*Oh,* okay!" she said happily.

When I slowly stroked her cheek, her body trembled as if she was having a seizure and she looked like a scared animal. Despite the fact that things weren't that different from before, the reason why Jung Ha-Yan was wary must be because I looked a little different from usual.

I was sincerely concerned and thankful. I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan must have felt how my slightly awkward skinship from before was very different from now, no, she probably knew better than anyone. Jung Ha-Yan probably thought that she was receiving an unknown affection and I understood why she would think that way.

Just then, she suddenly released a small cry.

"*Ah.*"

"Huh?"

She wrapped her arms around her stomach while breathing heavily and naturally, I was confused by the sudden change in the situation. She looked like she was in pain.

"You're not in pain, are you?" I asked.

"Yes, I-I'm fine," she answered.

When I expressed my concern, her expression started changing little by little and I saw her body trembling again.

'What's going on… '

"Are you really okay?" I asked again.

"Yes, I'm fine, oppa. My stomach just hurts a little… I-It's a throbbing pain… on my stab wound…" she said.

"Shouldn't we call for Miss Hee-Young?"I asked.

"I-It's not that bad. It's just… a really small pain…" she answered.

She was obviously making it up because she felt happy about me being concerned for her. I thought that she had matured a bit after the Cursed Shrine incident, but it felt like she was going to get another strange disease again. It was to the point that I was afraid that she would harm herself if she was left alone like this, so fixing her strange actions from the beginning was the most reasonable thing to do. The annoying part was that…

'I felt bad for her.'

My conscience kept responding to her absurd gesture.

'I'm sure she isn't actually in pain.'

I vividly remembered how she hugged me tight while her blood spilled on top of me. Back then, her warm blood and voice kept telling me that she was going to protect me. It was to the point that I felt ashamed for being suspicious of whether she was frowning because she was actually in pain. I thought that it wouldn't be so bad to fall for it this time and when thinking about how Jung Ha-Yan got stabbed in my place, doing that was the right thing to do. When I quietly stroked her hair and maintained my position from before, I saw her body trembling again.

"I-It hurts," she said.

'…'

"I think it'll be best to call for Miss Hee-Young," I told her.

“It’s not that bad. It’s not… if you just stroke my stomach a bit, I-I’ll feel better in no time. If you stroke me, oppa…” she said.

At this point, I became suspicious of whether she had planned on getting stabbed in my place. The way she slightly lifted her shirt and showed her stomach made her look like a puppy and on top of that, she wanted me to touch her bare skin. I noticed her watching my reaction nervously.

‘Maybe she’s thinking that this is her reward… ’

That must be it, so I had no reason to hesitate.

When I placed my hand on her stomach, she immediately became calm and even though she tried to control her expression, she already looked satisfied. Jung Ha-Yan kept complaining that she was in pain, but her expression said otherwise. She looked like someone that had everything going right for her.

“Do you feel better?” I asked.

“A li-little below my stomach… It’s painful,” she said.

“Here?” I asked.

“A little lower,” she answered.

“Is it here?”

“A b-bit lower…”

‘Shit… just how much lower does she want me to go?’

“A little lower… j-just a little bit more…”

‘Stop going lower… ’

“Go lower than that.”

‘Stop.’

She had improved a bit in that department. If the previous Jung Ha-Yan used childish

ways to come toward me, then this Jung Ha-Yan was using tricks. I couldn't help but feel that she was evolving. No, she was definitely evolving. Appealing to my sympathy was probably something that the Jung Ha-Yan in the past couldn't even imagine, and I thought that maybe, she learned these tricks by watching me, but I shook my head violently and pushed that thought aside.

'Even still... '

It was still childish. Jung Ha-Yan didn't have a talent for something like that and watching her right now felt like she didn't know how to control herself. It became painfully obvious because she kept telling me to go down like I was some kind of archeologist that kept digging. She was doing good at first, but she still had no idea that she had to be a little bit subtle to make the other person go along the flow, and that was when I thought that it would be a good idea to give her a big reward.

"Do you feel pain anywhere?"

I heard Sun Hee-Young's voice…

"I went to go find you hyung-nim, but it looks like you're already here," Park Deok-Gu said.

"Miss Ha-Yan, I'm glad you've woken up," Sun Hee-Young said.

It wasn't just her. Park Deok-Gu had a sly expression and Kim Ye-Ri was nodding quietly I even saw Kim Hyun-Sung, who was quietly covering Kim Ye-Ri's eyes. Behind the embarrassed Kim Hyun-Sung, the only underage party member spoke. "I know what's going on… they're making babies…"

'You know nothing! What does a kid know about making babies… '

It only took a moment for my face to turn red and even though I mumbled after removing my arm, no one paid attention to me.

"Ha-Yan said that her stomach was hurting, so I was checking her condition," I said.

"I see… I was worried that we were interrupting you two," Sun Hee-Young said.

"*Hehe*… wouldn't it be better if we came back later?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

'Park Deok-Gu, you bastard!'

"It's fine, Deok-Gu. I-I really was checking her condition," I said.

At first, I was able to understand why Jung Ha-Yan was stuttering and even though there was a small incident, it had been a while since party seven had gathered together like this. Everyone was smiling and even though they didn't say it, everyone seemed like they were happy to see her and even Jung Ha-Yan seemed a bit happy to see them as well, although she was puffing her cheeks.

Right now, the guild was very busy. It may not be the case for Park Deok-Gu and Kim Ye-Ri, but Sun Hee-Young and Kim Hyun-Sung shouldn't be out like this, but despite that, I was sure that they wanted to spend some time with Jung Ha-Yan. Even though it didn't last long, talking with everyone was fun and out of all the party members, Park Deok-Gu was enjoying it the most since he enjoyed talking. He talked to the point that my ears started to hurt.

"I was really surprised, you know! When I mentioned that hyung-nim was going to the capital, noonim miraculously opened her eyes and suddenly got up. It was like when my grandma saw a cripple stand up in a church one time. That was the power of love! I'm sure of it!" he said excitedly.

"It was just her mind that was asleep. I'm sure a small amount of her consciousness was awake. Her physical treatment was perfect though," Sun Hee-Young explained.

"*Oh…* I see."

"I had a feeling she was going to wake up. Whenever we talked about hyung-nim, I noticed her flinching a bit and when she suddenly got up, I was really sur…"

'Stop it.'

Based on Park Deok-Gu's story, I was suspicious of whether Jung Ha-Yan had long been awake or not, but I thought that it wasn't that important because I was more worried about her extremely calm reaction. According to Park Deok-Gu, she already knew about the fact that I was heading to the capital, and seeing her cry and clinging to me should have been her natural reaction. When I was trying to figure out the meaning behind her calm expression, I heard a voice that answered that for me.

"Noonim was having such a hard time…"

'This bastard… '

"So I ran to Mr. Hyun-Sung and suggested that noonim should go with him. I deserve a reward, right?" he asked.

'This pig… '

"The Mercenary Queen has also approved it, Mr. Ki-Young. I thought about it and I think that it'll be best if you two went together since Miss Ha-Yan isn't in the position to start working anyway…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'More like she's not competent enough to do work… '

"I'm sure it'll help her mentally if she goes with you," he said.

It was probably because they didn't want to deal with her once I was gone.

'Even you, Kim Hyun-Sung?'

It felt like they had planned this out to target me, no, they were certainly targeting me!

CHAPTER 117
TO THE CAPITAL (2)

Kim Hyun-Sung looked very desperate. It was as if he was telling me to take Jung Ha-Yan and that she wouldn't be of any help if she stayed back. Even though her intelligence was high, her ability to work was close to zero. Her efficiency could increase if she stayed with me, but if I wasn't there with her, then she would probably put the guild in chaos. There had been a time when Kim Hyun-Sung went on an expedition without me and he realized just how difficult it was to control Jung Ha-Yan without me. Not only did she cry, get tired and fall asleep every day, but she even became somewhat hysterical. Kim Hyun-Sung was busy taking care of administrative work, so he didn't have the luxury to take care of Jung Ha-Yan.

'You… bastard.'

The problem was that I was also in a situation where I couldn't take care of Jung Ha-Yan either.

'I'm going to be a part of the high society.'

I was going to attend the social party as Cha Hee-Ra's lover, so taking Jung Ha-Yan with me wouldn't make sense. Not only would she get in the way when I talked with the nobles and the noblewomen of the Holy Empire, but my actions of showing off my relationship with Cha Hee-Ra would become restricted. The lucky break that I was looking forward to was about to crumble down, so I thought that it wouldn't hurt to rebel a little.

"Being together may seem nice, but as you can see, Ha-Yan said that she isn't feeling well… I'm worried about whether she'll be able to endure the long trip or not."

"*Ah!*"

"Just now, she complained that she felt pain in her stomach," I said.

"I'm fine now! Really!" Jung Ha-Yan almost immediately spoke up.

'Jung Ha-Yan!'

She had just thrown away her opportunity to exaggerate her pain forever all because she wanted to chase after the immediate pleasure. Her pretending to be in pain just now seemed like a lie.

'I need to think… '

"No, Ha-Yan. You still need time to recover…"

"Doesn't noonim feel the calmest when she's next to you, hyung-nim?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Y-You're right, Deok-Gu oppa," Jung Ha-Yan said.

I had no time because I was going to leave soon. I wanted to make a plan so that I wouldn't attend the party with Jung Ha-Yan, but I couldn't think of a way to respond to a conversation that had no logic.

"Love is the sweetest remedy. It's the panacea I tell you!" Park Deok-Gu said excitedly.

'What kind of logic is that?'

"No, Mr. Deok-Gu. Mr. Ki-Young is right. Even though her body has fully recovered, she still needs time for her to become stable even though her body and magic don't seem to have any problems," Sun Hee-Young spoke up.

"It's because it's her mind that needs stability, Hee-Young noonim," Park Deok-Gu said.

The moment Jung Ha-Yan woke up, no, from the moment it was decided that I was going to go to the capital with Cha Hee-Ra, I had a feeling that he had already designed this elaborate plan. I felt helpless when Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung ignored my opinion and declared their thoughts and for some reason, they trusted Jung Ha-Yan's magic-like words to the point that it felt strange. Considering all that, there was nothing I could say to change their minds.

"…"

It was decided. I thought that the only thing I could do was talk in a slightly

miserable tone. “I guess it can’t be helped. I guess I’ll go with her.”

“Ahem…”

“You’ve made the right choice,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Nice, noonim!” Park Deok-Gu cheered.

“*Hehe…”*

As the loser, I lowered my head while the victors cheered. I sighed, but there was nothing I could do about the situation. The only thing I could do now was to educate Jung Ha-Yan well.

‘I should especially educate her about Cha Hee-Ra.’

“I can’t believe how much time has passed!”

“Mr. Ki-Young and Miss Ha-Yan should start preparing.” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“Before that, I have tasks that I need to hand off…” I said.

“Oh, I see. Have you already packed your things?” he asked.

“Yes, of course. They can be brought down right away,” I answered.

To be honest, I just wanted to run away without handing over my task, but if things didn’t work out while I was gone, then it would be my job to fix them. I had already told Hwang Jung-Yeon about the majority of my tasks, but there was a difference between Kim Hyun-Sung hearing about it and not hearing about it. Since there wasn’t enough time, I showed him the documents that I had prepared in advance and he nodded as I explained them. Since his intelligence wasn’t low, I was certain that he could do these - our Hyun-Sung wasn’t stupid. Honestly, there weren’t any major tasks.

“There aren’t any major tasks that have to be taken care of. We have already picked the new staff members and reestablished the workflow so that people would know exactly what to do. I think all you really need to do is to organize the sorted documents and comprehend them. Of course, as the final person in charge, you need to authorize tasks or check on them as well.” I explained.

“I see,” he said.

“You’ll receive reports from Miss Jung-Yeon regarding the alchemy planning department and from Kim Mi-Young, the newly appointed team leader of the imperial legal team. I wrote a guideline regarding the tasks that the business team is currently taking care of so please check up on all the production and distribution lines. For the items that I have already checked, I would appreciate it if you could also check them yourself,” I told him.

“Okay, I understand,” he said.

“You also need to check all the issues from the crisis response department and also…”

As I continued talking, I noticed how Kim Hyun-Sung’s expression changed little by little and I was sure that he must have realized by now the sheer amount of work that I had done.

‘You’re competent.’

He looked as if he was saying this to me. Honestly, the results were made because of the joint efforts of the guild staff members and me. It wasn’t only because I was competent. Even though I didn’t enjoy working, I did my best to show our regressor just how competent I was. Of course, the reality was that I wouldn’t have been able to create these results without the help of the new staff members. The reason why the guild was starting to solidify its foundations once again was that the loyal servants were working hard, but no matter the reason, the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung started to think of me as a competent person was the beautiful part of all of these. There wasn’t a need for me to hand over the credit that I deserved to the slaves.

‘I just need to take care of Kim Mi-Young myself.’

“Roughly…”

“Okay, I understand,” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted me.

At this point, Kim Hyun-Sung looked kind of guilty and he felt bad for handing over Jung Ha-Yan to me.

‘As long as you know… I’ve already forgiven you, Hyun-Sung.’

“Th-Thank you,” he said.

“Miss Jung-Yeon should know the majority of the plans and guidelines,” I told him.

I wanted to tell him that he just had to work on the tasks with a human computer that had a good memory, but I felt bad for Hwang Jung-Yeon, so I decided to hold it in. After explaining a lot of things to him, I realized that a lot of time had passed and even though I wanted to give him more details on some of the tasks, I couldn’t make Cha Hee-Ra wait any longer.

“I’ll get going now, Mr. Hyun-Sung.”

“Things will become lighter by the time you return and I’m referring to your workload,” he said.

“I feel bad for handing over my tasks to you,” I said.

“There’s no need for you to feel bad because this is also a good opportunity for the Blue Guild. I had a lot of work to do as well… with Mr. Deok-Gu and Ye-Ri’s training… and I was thinking about recruiting new party members that’ll go on expeditions or accept requests,” he explained.

“Hahaha.”

“Thank you.”

“No, I should be the one thanking you,” he said.

I was worried that maybe I had a death flag on me because we were happily saying goodbye to each other, but I was sure that nothing was going to happen.

Just like before, the Blue Guild would focus on recovering and returning the guild to normal, Park Deok-Gu would grow and Kim Ye-Ri should grow even more considering her potential. Lindel’s liveliness would continue, and the talented people would also continue to flock over to the Blue Guild. Seeing the slightly gentle look on Kim Hyun-Sung’s face, I couldn’t help but think that he must have grown fond of me. I didn’t think that I was a sentimental person, but his expression touched my heart.

‘Stop looking at me like that. Your hyung understands, you bastard.’

When I reached out my hand, Kim Hyun-Sung grabbed it and when the handshake seemed too simple, I thought that maybe I should hug him, but when I moved slightly closer to him, I felt awkward. When Kim Hyun-Sung saw me, the corner of his lips went up as he patted my back first.

'You handsome bastard, you have a strong body.'

After the slightly awkward goodbye, Park Deok-Gu quietly approached me. "Hyung-nim…"

He opened his arms as if he was asking for a hug, but after punching his chest instead, I immediately spoke up. I didn't want to hug him because being in his arms was probably going to be painful.

"Always remember, Deok-Gu. If I can do it, you can do better."

"I'll keep that in my heart every day," he said.

"And eat with Miss Jung-Yeon once in a while. She has been pestering me every day so that you two can meet," I told him.

"What?!" he exclaimed.

"Please take care of yourself, Miss Hee-Young, although it probably won't take that long…" I told her.

"I will. Make sure to do your best out there," she said.

"No volunteer work while I'm gone. Let's continue building a beautiful Lindel when I come back," I said.

"Okay…"

"You too, kid," I said.

"Okay, go do your best, mister…" Kim Ye-Ri said.

When I looked at Jung Ha-Yan with her bag in tow, she quickly came to my side as if she was afraid that I was going to leave her behind. When I opened the guild house's door, I saw the red-headed Cha Hee-Ra, but what caught my attention the most was

the beast behind her.

"*Huh?*"

The monster's head was a bird and it had wings attached to its large body, so this had to be the monster that I only heard of in mythology.

"A griffon?" I asked.

"There are only two of these in the city of Lindel and there's nothing better than taking this guy when traveling far. The Holy Empire wanted to mass produce these, but they failed in doing that… so they're very rare." Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"I see…"

"I didn't think that three people would be attending… I'm not sure if my Boong Boong will like it though since it usually only carries two people," she said.

"Aren't the other members of the Red Mercenary Guild attending?" I asked.

"The remaining members will follow us by land. Wouldn't it be more comfortable if we got there first? We should enjoy ourselves since we're going to the capital, so hop on. I'll be first, my honey can be second and your second girlfriend can take the last spot… you might fall, so be sure to hold on," Cha Hee-Ra told Jung Ha-Yan.

After nodding, I carefully got on top but for some reason, I couldn't get used to it, and naturally, I was scared. Just riding on this monster's back made me nervous so I had no choice but to naturally grab onto Cha Hee-Ra's waist. Of course, she smelled nice and even though I felt something soft, I didn't have the luxury to enjoy it.

"*Eeeek*…"

'It hurts.'

"*Eeeeeek!*"

I guess my actions made Jung Ha-Yan mad because she grabbed my waist and tried to pull me away from Cha Hee-Ra. She probably didn't think of the possibility that both of us could fall to the ground if I let go of Cha Hee-Ra.

'We'll both die if we fall, Ha-Yan. Please stop pulling meee… '

I felt like something was going to happen. The more the griffon flew into the air, the more I noticed how the guild members were getting smaller and smaller as they waved at us. Hwang Jung-Yeon and Lee Sang-Hee were the two people that I didn't manage to say goodbye to and I saw them waving at us from a window. It was the same for Park Joong-Ki and Kim Mi-Young, who had helped me a lot these days.

"You took your sweet time saying goodbye. I guess you've grown fond of them, honey. I didn't think that you were that type of person," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"Noona, I'm only human you know," I told her.

"You have a cute side, too. You can hold on tighter, but be careful and make sure that your second girlfriend doesn't fall," she said.

I accepted her suggestion and tightened my grip around her. When I waved my hand while feeling a bit nervous, I heard a voice from below us.

"Hyung-nim! Noonim! Make sure that all three of you return to the guild!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

'It won't even take two months, Deok-Gu.'

Even if we returned two years later, the three of us wouldn't come back together. As long as Jung Ha-Yan, who was nodding at what Park Deok-Gu had said, didn't do anything unexpected.

'Don't make any promises, Ha-Yan.'

I thought that it wasn't so bad being sent off like this despite hearing weird things like that and for some reason, I recalled what Park Deok-Gu had said when we first arrived in Lindel.

'Hey world, Park Deok-Gu is here!'

Those weren't the exact words, but I could remember him shouting something similar to that. When I looked down as we flew up, I finally understood why Park Deok-Gu had shouted those words.

‘It looks small.’

The endless continent looked so small that it seemed like it would fit in the palm of my hand.

CHAPTER 118
SHAMAN (1)

“How does it feel to fly?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“It feels great,” I replied.

I was a bit scared, but it wasn’t bad, and being able to see the vast continent all at once felt like a privilege. The ride itself wasn’t that great compared to other transportation methods, but seeing the sight from afar made me feel as if I was on a trip overseas. What caught my attention were the magnificent natural environment, a huge waterfall, a large tree and forest, and a massive cliff. I couldn’t remember visiting all the tourist attractions on Earth, but I could guarantee that what I was seeing right now couldn’t be compared to what Earth had.

“It’s awesome,” I commented.

“It’s because that’s where the monsters live, so people can’t just go in and develop the place like what people had done on Earth. If it wasn’t for the monsters, then the trees would have already been cut down and cleared since trees are a valuable resource,” she explained.

Cha Hee-Ra was right. The reason why the tourist industry didn’t exist here was probably because of the monsters and that was why the surrounding could maintain their forms. Basically, the monsters were the guardians of nature. I once heard of a writer who said that humans were the cancers of Earth and it was kind of true because the monsters here were vaccines that killed cancer cells. If the monsters didn’t exist, then the natural environment I was seeing right now wouldn’t have existed.

‘I wonder if the tourism business is worth doing here… ’

I felt a bit flustered for having that kind of thought right now.

“Oppa…”

I heard Jung Ha-Yan's voice. I guess the fact that I was talking to Cha Hee-Ra made her feel left out because I felt her hugging me even tighter. Naturally, I lightly stroked her hand because I was proud of her for enduring it.

"…"

Normally, she would've caused major trouble by now. As such, rather than giving credit to the Jung Ha-Yan that had been at the Cursed Shrine, it felt like Jung Ha-Yan herself was being thoughtful and understanding. I wasn't exactly sure why, but I had an idea.

'Is it because Cha Hee-Ra saved my life?'

It was very likely. The continent was dangerous and not only did we not know what was going to happen inside the city, but we would be in even more danger if we went outside the city. I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan felt that way too because she had received the most damage during the recent incident. During the Cursed Shrine incident, her plan had been to stay in a dungeon forever in order to protect me from unknown threats, but if she no longer wanted to imprison me, then it was probably time for her to make a decision.

'I feel anxious, but she is a woman who can protect oppa… '

This was probably the thought that she had about Cha Hee-Ra, no, I was sure she was thinking this because otherwise, there was no reason for her to remain quiet.

'She may even think that she's using Cha Hee-Ra.'

I was happy about the fact that Jung Ha-Yan was evolving more and more, but on the other hand, I got nervous at the thought.

Time passed while I was having different thoughts and after flying for half a day, the sight I saw at the end was completely different from the Free City of Lindel.

"*Wooooooow…*"

Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed when she saw the sight.

"*Woah…*"

“It’s your first time seeing it, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

Naturally, I nodded. The large, gothic buildings, and a huge temple that was reflecting the sunset and its magnificence were the things that I noticed even from a distance.

“Yeah, it’s amazing.”

There must have been other people coming here because I saw a few griffons. Not only Korea, but I was sure that guild masters from other free cities were gathering. When I looked down, I saw the citizens of the Holy Empire Benigoa, and the place was even more sophisticated than the medieval style that I imagined. Despite that, it didn’t seem dirty or unsanitary at all.

“Civilization here isn’t as outdated as we think and they actually have a long history and traditions. Both the citizens and nobles are proud of their cultures and they have the power and intelligence to match that. In addition, strong people like me stand out in the Holy Empire,” Cha Hee-Ra explained.

“It seems that…”

“It would be best if you don’t look so stupid, darling. Players who look down on the imperial people don’t live long,” she warned.

“Thanks for the warning, noona,” I said.

Cha Hee-Ra was right. After checking the soldiers’ stats using Mind’s Eye, I couldn’t say that they were weaker than the ones in Lindel. When compared individually, they were stronger, but since there was a difference in population, it was useless to compare the holy empire and Lindel. I knew they had some kind of military force, but this was more incredible than I thought. Especially…

‘If they have forces just as strong as Cha Hee-Ra… ’

I was sure that there wouldn’t be any crazy groups that would look down on them and invade the Holy Empire. It might have happened in the past, but considering that there weren’t any groups like that right now, it meant that all those wild monkeys had died.

“That restaurant over there is pretty good. It’s really good and I think it’ll be good to

take your second girlfriend over there as well. The blacksmith shop way over there has good-quality items and sometimes they even have epic-ranked weapons for sale. Compared to Lindel, they're pretty cheap. *Oh,* there are also players that have settled in the capital. Getting permission to stay here is a bit strict, but once you've settled in, they would say that you already have the advantage, but I don't believe it," Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"It's the same no matter where people are living," I said.

"That's true," she said in agreement.

Cha Hee-Ra was more talkative than I thought and I guess she hadn't been out in a while because she seemed like she was enjoying herself. It obviously wasn't because I was out with her that she was like this. After all, she was the type of person whose mood changed depending on what she liked, so I was pretty sure that she was excited to see the capital for the first time in a while.

"That's the castle we're going to be staying at, but of course, we won't stay there for the entire day since that place's a bit boring," Cha Hee-Ra said.

Even while she was explaining her sightseeing plan around the capital in the detail, the griffon was still flying toward the castle. While I was writing down her advice in my head, I didn't forget to look at other people's skills with Mind Eye.

When the griffon landed on what looked like a landing pad, I saw imperial soldiers waiting for us and the person that stood out the most was the gramps who was wearing an ostentatious armor. Seeing him smile brightly at Cha Hee-Ra made me think that they had a good relationship.

"It's been a while, Hee-Ra," he said.

"It has been a while, grandpa. I guess you're still pretty healthy. Are you still active?" she asked.

"Of course. More than that, there's been rumors about you… I'm guessing this man is the Mercenary Queen's Lover that people have been talking about," he said.

"My name is Lee Ki-Young," I said, introducing myself.

Naturally, I activated Mind's Eye and immediately saw his stats.

'Victor Hart, 74 years old, his stats are… '

Above Cha Hee-Ra… The strong players that Cha Hee-Ra mentioned must have been people like him because he was a monster. If he struck my head with just the palm of his hand, my head would immediately go flying for sure. It was very impressive seeing him wearing armor so calmly and I noticed him looking up and down at me.

"Yes, it's nice to meet you. The lady behind you is…"

"My honey's second girlfriend," Cha Hee-Ra answered.

Jung Ha-Yan bit her lips and then spoke. She did seem uncomfortable, but she bowed properly and introduced herself. "My name is Jung Ha-Yan."

'Good job, my Ha-Yan.'

"You're a lot more skilled than I thought…" Victor commented.

"And that's why I brought him here. Did you think I'd bring him here for nothing? Anyway, I can explain the details about my honey later… grandpa, how about a spar?" she asked him.

"No thanks. I have no intention of causing a ruckus inside the castle again. I'll take you on later if I have time. *Tsk.* No matter how much time passed, you still haven't changed," he said.

"I just didn't really have the chance to be active recently, but are we the first here again?" she asked.

"No, you're the second group to arrive. The people from the Free City of Celia have been waiting for a while," he answered.

"Who?"

"Kasugano Yuno," he answered.

"The shaman?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"That's right. I wonder if something happened…" he said.

“That’s odd considering that she’s always late,” she commented.

I saw the two walking ahead while talking and I guess that the gramp named Victor wasn’t really interested in me which actually made me feel comfortable. Drawing attention just because I was the Mercenary Queen’s Lover could make it difficult for me to walk around.

While Cha Hee-Ra and Victor were talking, Jung Ha-Yan walked up next to me as if she was excited. I also wanted to talk to her, but it was natural for me to think that listening to Victor and Cha Hee-Ra’s conversation was more important. The small conversations among the powerful could become useful information for people like me.

‘Kasugano Yuno?’

That person must be the one managing the large guild in Celia where the Japanese had settled in. Seeing how Cha Hee-Ra didn’t seem hostile, I guess she wasn’t from the Yamato Guild and just when I was retaining all that information in my head, I saw a woman wearing simple clothes from afar.

‘Japanese?’

No, she looked more neat than simple. The people around her followed her as if they were assisting her. The woman in front of us quietly closed her eyes and was walking toward us as if she was blind. Her long braided hair looked as if it was going to touch the ground while her calm attitude impressed me the most.

[Checking Player Kasugano Yuno’s Status Window and Potential.]

[The eyes that can see the attribute essence, the past, and the future are resisting Mind’s Eye.]

‘Shit… ’

I immediately lowered my head because I had never expected this to happen. Naturally, many thoughts went through my head because this situation was the first

for me. While I was afraid that she would find out that I was trying to peek at her stats, I suddenly noticed that the status window was changing.

[Player Kasugano Yuno has opened her Status Window and Potential.]

'What the… '

[Checking Player Kasugano Yuno's Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Kasugano Yuno]

[Title - Quiet Shaman]

[Age - 20]

[Nature - Fallen Seeker of Truth]

[Job - Shaman - Legendary Rank]

[Job Effect - Acquired basic magic knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired intermediate magic knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced magic knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced black magic knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced astrology knowledge]

[Stats]

[Strength - 13/Below average growth limit]

[Agility - 20/Below average growth limit]

[Stamina - 17/Below average growth limit]

[Intelligence - 89/Above epic growth limit]

[Endurance - 15/Below average growth limit]

[Luck - 100/Above legendary growth limit]

[Magic - 96/Above legendary growth limit]

[Gear - None]

[Attribute - Eyes That Can See the Essence, Past, and Future - Legendary Rank]

[Overall Review - She's a legendary ranked shaman. Even though her strength, agility, and stamina are below average, her luck, intelligence, and magic potential are very high, which are good stats for a rearguard. Please don't think that she's on the same level as you just because she has below-average stats. Compared to you, she's essentially a different type of person. Even though her legendary attribute, eyes that can see the essence, the past and the future, and her job effects are good, she seems tainted and it seems that she isn't in her best condition. I recommend not becoming close to her.]

'What's this… '

She had a legendary-ranked attribute, job, and potential stats, making her a strong person and this was my first time seeing someone with high luck stats, but despite that, her below-average stats bothered me.

But what bothered me the most was…

'What the… '

She was looking at me with her eyes closed.

'...What's going on?'

She was even crying.

CHAPTER 119
SHAMAN (2)

'Why is she crying?'

I couldn't see Yuno's eyes, so I wasn't certain, but it seemed like she was blind. Despite that, she was looking straight at me. Naturally, I looked around because I couldn't understand the situation, and seeing her continuously cry made me feel flustered to the point that I found it hard to endure. I desperately looked away, but I started to feel nervous when she started approaching me.

'What the… '

When I looked away, she stopped. I guess she didn't realize that she was crying because she quietly wiped her tears with a handkerchief.

I just couldn't tell what she was thinking. Finding out the meaning behind her 'fallen seeker of truth' nature was difficult and I had no idea how her crazy attribute, *eyes that can see the essence, past, and future*, functioned. The only thing I knew was that her eyes were way better than mine, so basically, I had met a person that I couldn't understand or read at all.

'Shit.'

There was nothing more frustrating than meeting someone unpredictable. It made sense why Cha Hee-Ra felt a bit uncomfortable when she saw Yuno since she had no idea how Yuno was going to act. Jung Ha-Yan was excluded because she had at least expressed her feelings.

I couldn't calculate the actions of the shaman who was in front of us and obviously, I became wary of her unpredictability.

When I quietly took a step back, I saw the lovely Cha Hee-Ra in front of me.

'I can only trust Hee-Ra noona right now.'

“What are you up to?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“It has been a while, Miss Cha Hee-Ra,” Yuno said.

“Let’s skip the greeting… what brings you here all of a sudden? You’re even crying…” she said.

“It’s nothing. I just came here to greet you,” she answered.

“Really? We’re not even that close to greet each other. Actually, it seems like you have business with my darling more than me… I’m right, aren’t I?” she asked.

“No, that’s not true. I just… really wanted to come and greet you, Miss Cha Hee-Ra,” Yuno answered.

“You know that we’re feeling a bit sensitive because of what those bastards from Celia had done, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“…”

“I’m not sure if you’re involved in that attack or not, but the pests there are in a bad spot right now and we don’t know what kind of stupid things they’re going to do again. Despite that, you came to greet me at a time like this… you stupid woman. If we weren’t inside the castle, you would’ve been dead by now,” she threatened her.

“What exactly happened for you to… act this way…” Yuno asked.

“If you don’t know, just shut up and get out of my sight. I don’t care if you really don’t know or you’re just pretending not to know, but my darling seems a bit anxious,” she said.

Cha Hee-Ra was trustworthy, and she seemed on edge. I thought that they didn’t have a bad relationship based on the reaction she showed when Yuno’s name was mentioned earlier, but I guess she was a bit sensitive recently thanks to the terror attack that happened in Lindel. Obviously, if that shaman usually acted differently, then I would understand Cha Hee-Ra’s reaction. Based on the conversation between Cha Hee-Ra and Victor, it sounded like the shaman wasn’t all that interested in this meeting. Despite that, not only did she suddenly come here early, but she even gave the excuse that she came here to greet Cha Hee-Ra, so naturally, I became suspicious of whether she had other intentions or not.

When Cha Hee-Ra spoke violently, the shaman's lackeys started talking as well but the way they stood up for the shaman like this didn't affect Cha Hee-Ra in a positive way.

"Your words are too harsh, Miss Cha Hee-Ra."

"Miss Yuno was just…"

"I told you to be quiet, you trash," Cha Hee-Ra said, cutting them off.

To make things worse, Cha Hee-Ra started casting her magic and that was when Yuno spoke up after staying quiet. "I-It's fine everyone. Please stop. I guess all of this was so sudden," Yuno said.

"…"

After slowly bowing toward us, she spoke very calmly. "Miss Cha Hee-Ra and everyone else… I sincerely apologize for making you uncomfortable and if there's something that Celia did wrong… I would like to apologize in their place."

I noticed Victor staring at Cha Hee-Ra and he was signaling her to respond to Yuno's sincere apology. As a person that worked for the empire, there was no way that Victor would be happy to see a fight between two powerful people.

Now, it was up to Cha Hee-Ra.

"I accept," she said.

'That wasn't bad, Hee-Ra noona.'

"I'll be on my way now. Please have a good time…" Yuno said.

The Mercenary Queen nodded and the shaman quietly went back the way she came from. Strangely enough, it was at that moment when I heard a voice.

- When you have time, please come to my room. My room is located on the second floor of the west building.

'Um… '

I was sure that I was the only one that could hear it.

- I really hope you'll come.

'What kind of shitty situation is this?'

This was beyond ridiculous because I couldn't understand a single thing. Why did she want to see me? Was she really crying while looking at me earlier, and why did she invite me to her room? It felt like everything was hidden behind a veil.

'And I don't think she wants to have a one-night stand either... '

It would have been enjoyable if I got this offer in a hotel bar.

Obviously, I needed more information. That was when Cha Hee-Ra complained while looking at me. "I'm getting goosebumps because I have no idea what she's thinking."

"Do you know her, noona?" I asked.

"This is my second time talking to her and it's really interesting seeing her talk like that… that was the first time she talked that much," she answered.

"…"

"Yuno came here about five years ago and made a guild in Celia… and now she's the owner of Yozora, a new guild that has been very successful. I'm not sure why she's here. Some say that she's able to see the past and future and others have said ridiculous things like she's able to see things others can't, but considering her actions so far, I don't think she was lying… honestly, I don't know much about her either," Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"…"

"Don't look at me like that, darling. I'm sure my men and the Black Swan Guild are trying to get more information, so we can ask when they arrive," she said.

"Okay," I said.

"But there is one thing I'm sure of," she said.

“What is it?”

“That woman is blind,” she answered.

“I knew that, too,” I told her.

As expected, relying on her for something like this wasn’t a good idea.

‘Maybe I should’ve gotten a report or something.’

I should have prepared more before coming here.

“That woman is a bit strange, oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“You think so?” I asked.

“Yes, she’s a bit odd. There’s something… strange…” she said.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t wrong, but she already didn’t like Yuno and the way she stuck closer to me made me feel a bit embarrassed.

“Hey grandpa, we can go to our rooms now, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“Of course. Where will you eat?” Victor asked.

“We’re just going to eat at the cafeteria here. Actually, can you ask people to bring food to our rooms in two hours? I’m a bit tired because of the long trip,” she said.

“Didn’t you just say that you wanted to spar?” he asked.

“I’m upset,” she answered.

“Well, you can do whatever you want, but as I said before, causing trouble is…”

“I know. I shouldn’t fight, but you already know that I’m in a sensitive mood. You know what happened in Lindel, right?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“I do, Hee-Ra, but if you have a complaint, it’s better to do it officially through the organization. You’re too hot-headed…” he explained.

“I know that,” she said.

“*Tsk*. Go to your room,” he said.

“See you tomorrow.”

She walked around as if this was her own house and seeing her walking around the huge castle gave me an idea of how Cha Hee-Ra was treated within the Holy Empire.

“The food here isn’t that bad. It’s a bit greasy, but it’s not bad to have it once in a while. Let’s go to our rooms for now,” she suggested.

When the door opened, I saw a large area, but the word *large* wasn’t enough to describe it. There were rooms within the room and there seemed to be four to five rooms inside this massive space. I had never been to an expensive hotel, but I was certain that this couldn't be compared to any hotel.

“There are a lot of rooms, so just pick one. There are two bathrooms by the way,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“This is nice,” I commented.

“The empire provided this room… not bad, right? It’s not bad to come once in a while and rest here and although I’m not the type that really likes these things, I feel like being extravagant sometimes feels nice. Since we have two hours, you can stay here until the food comes. I have some business to take care of so I’m heading out,” she said.

“Okay,” I said.

“If you’re bored, you can look around the place since no one will complain about it and it won’t be dangerous either,” she suggested.

“Sure.”

I noticed her looking at me while talking in a straightforward manner.

I was sure that there was a reason why Cha Hee-Ra came here in a hurry, and I was certain that it had something to do with her work. The way she grabbed her things and left the room made it seem like she was in a bit of a hurry. Jung Ha-Yan must

have felt better after she left because she jumped on the comfy bed and I recalled a few of the warnings Cha Hee-Ra gave, but I stopped thinking about them.

'She's doing fine so far… '

I didn't have the time to focus on Jung Ha-Yan right now and it was obviously because of the shaman.

'*When you have time, please come to my room. My room is located on the second floor of the west building.'*

Her desperate voice kept playing in my head and I thought that it could be a trap, but I didn't think that she was stupid enough to do something like that inside the Holy Empire's castle. More than that, it was likely that she knew about Mind's Eye, so I had to go and see her. I thought that it would be best to talk to her at least once. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Mind's Eye was the source of my livelihood. As someone whose stats were trash, it was a weapon that only I could use and I wasn't happy about the fact that someone knew of its existence.

'And Cha Hee-Ra is out… '

This was my chance to go and see her. If the worst situation that I imagined came true, then I had to get rid of her no matter what.

"Ha-Yan," I called out.

"Yes?"

"I'm going to go out for a little bit," I told her.

"*Oh…* okay."

"You don't mind waiting for me here, right?" I asked.

"…"

"I won't be long," I said.

She didn't seem happy about it, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't suppress my freedom. It only took a moment for me to leave Jung Ha-Yan who nodded while looking at me with the

eyes of a puppy that had been abandoned.

I asked questions and left a good impression on the servants and the maids of the castle so that I could stand out in case an accident happened. Moreover, I needed people that could explain what happened.

'In case it's a trap… '

I was nervous, but what I was imagining probably wouldn't happen and if something strange happened to my body, then Jung Ha-Yan would definitely be notified immediately. I touched the bag full of potions that I had brought with me as well as Juliena. Now that I thought about it…

'Juliena didn't react when that woman approached me.'

Juliena must have not categorized her as a threat and based on the situation earlier, I didn't think that she was targeting me. Now that the issue with Lee Seol-Ho had been taken care of, I wasn't planning on dying anytime soon and if she tried to hurt me, it would only make things worse.

When I slowly walked toward her room, I started seeing the members of the Yozora Guild standing outside. They greeted me as if they were waiting for me.

'What the… '

"You can enter this room," they said.

"Okay."

"Your weapon…"

The man that noticed Juliena said that they would hold onto it for me, but it was impossible for me to comply with their demand. Fortunately, I heard a voice at that moment.

"It's fine, please send him in."

"Yes, Lady Yuno."

The moment they nodded and opened the door, I saw the blind woman kneeling with

her eyes closed. I touched Juliena in case there was an unknown threat, but she didn't respond.

"I've been waiting for you," Yuno said.

"Why did you want to see me?"I asked.

"My…"

"…"

"Lord," she said.

'What the hell?'

The way she slowly took off her outer clothes and walked toward me was a sight to behold. I didn't think that she was lying because her face was trembling as she cried tears of joy. This was a ridiculous situation. I couldn't think for a moment.

"*Ahhh*… my lord. I've waited for you for a long time," Yuno said.

'C-Crazy woman… '

"Please punish, punish this naughty servant of yours… my lord," she said.

'Shit… '

When I glanced over, I saw bizarre tools that I had never seen before.

"Please punish me… my master, m-my master."

"You're crazy!" I yelled.

I tried opening the door again because of the unexpected situation, but it simply rattled without opening at all.

"Please punish this humble pig…" Yuno said.

"Go away!" I screamed.

I couldn’t help but scream.

CHAPTER 120
DARK WORLD (1)

I couldn't help but scream. I couldn't understand what happened just now, and I also couldn't understand what was going on.

'This woman is crazy.'

The shaman that was in front of me must have lost her mind.

I kept pulling the door open, but the door was shut tightly. This wasn't the type of trap that I had imagined, but it was more confusing than the situation I had in mind. During all of this, the shaman kept saying things that I couldn't understand while bowing.

"Master! Master! I've waited a long time for this day."

"S-Shit!"

"My light, my love, my everything," Yuno said.

"Don't come near me," I said.

I got goosebumps on my back as she crawled toward me and I had no idea how to deal with this.

'Should I call for Jung Ha-Yan?'

If I made physical contact with Yuno, then Jung Ha-Yan would find out whether I liked it or not and I was sure that she would come here right away after realizing that something happened to me. Actually, she may already be on her way here.

'However... '

When I thought about whether that was the right choice or not, I couldn't help but frown. Because of the shaman's unexpected actions, I had completely forgotten my

first objective of coming here. My goal was to find out why she called for me and to see how much of my power she knew about.

I must've stepped back without realizing it because my back was now against the door, but Yuno wasn't that far from the spot where she started bowing. Even though the door was locked, there wasn't a reason for her to hurt me.

'If she wants to do something… '

She would have already done it. The way her body shook made me feel anxious, but having a conversation with her was the right decision. For a moment, I thought about imitating her master, but I didn't think that it was a good idea because if her eyes could see one's essence, then she would notice my shenanigans.

When I sat on a chair after looking around, the shaman looked at me as if she was expecting something. Something felt off, so when I looked back, I saw the bizarre tools and they were items I didn't want to know the use of.

'Why does she have those things in the first place… '

"*Ahhh*…"

'Don't make those noises!'

"Master," she said.

'Don't expect anything… '

The spot I was sitting in wasn't that great. I wasn't sure why there was a whip on the chair, but having a normal conversation was the priority. The problem was that I didn't know how I should start the conversation. I was confused about whether I should lead the conversation or if I should go along with what she was saying. As a person who was in a position of overwhelming power, I was inwardly screaming that I didn't want to be in that position and I was doing that while looking a bit miserable.

It only took a moment for me to realize that I had been thinking for a long time. No matter what was going on, I thought that it would the best to say something, but the shaman spoke first. "Please speak comfortably."

"Do you know who I am?" I asked.

“You’re my one and only master,” she answered.

“That’s not the point of my question. I’m asking if you know exactly who I am,” I said.

“I know nothing other than the fact that you’re my master,” she said.

‘What in the world is going on… ’

“I realized it the moment I saw you. The fact that you’re the person I’ve been searching for and that you’re able to see through everything…” she explained.

“So you knew?” I probed.

“I-I’m sorry. Does that make you uncomfortable?” she asked.

‘Stop it.’

“I’m honestly a bit flustered. I don’t understand why you’re calling me your master and honestly, I think that this is my first time seeing you… I only came here to confirm some of my thoughts and I don’t know the reason why you’re treating me like this. And you’re right. I do feel a bit uncomfortable,” I told her.

“I’m very sorry. I-I didn’t think about how you would feel… y-you see… yes… I’m sorry. I-I’ve made a terrible mistake. P-Please kill me,” Yuno said.

“…”

“*Oh my…* you probably don’t understand the situation because I-I got too excited. Please forgive me!” she yelled.

‘She’s not acting… ’

A different type of tear flowed down from her closed eyes and she seemed very confused. I felt like I could trust her more because she didn’t seem like she was lying. One thing I was sure of was that she could see the future and the past because that was the explanation I saw regarding her attribute.

[Attribute - Eyes That Can See The Essence, Past, and Future - Legendary Rank]

[Pay the price to see what others can't see.]

The explanation was vague with no details about how it worked, but it was correct to assume that she could see the future and the past because the name of the attribute was *Eyes That Can See the Past and Future*.

'Maybe… '

"Have you looked into my future?" I asked.

It could be assumed that the future me must have influenced her in a bad way and as she continued looking into the future, that influence must have started eating her away. Of course, that was assuming the shaman wasn't lying and she was truly showing how she felt.

"That's…"

"Or have you met me in the past?" I asked.

"None of those, Master. To be exact…"

"To be exact?"

"It's neither the future nor the past. I'm not sure how to explain it… but there are things I was able to see with these eyes. It may sound strange, but what I'm seeing is both the past and the future and it's a memory etched into my body, to be exact," Yuno explained.

"A memory etched into your body?" I asked.

"Actually, it'll be better to say that it's an engraved memory of the spirit. I'm not sure how to explain it, but six years ago when I first came here…"

"I thought you came here four years ago?" I asked, interrupting her.

"That's what the public thinks, but I came here six years ago. I-If you'd like, I can make it four years ago…"

“No, that doesn’t really matter. I’d actually like an explanation,” I told her.

“Wh-When I first came to this place, the first thing I saw was me being by your side and I’m not sure how to say it, but I remember being really happy. Of course, it was a memory that I couldn’t accept at that time…” Yuno explained.

“Is there a reason why you don’t think that’s the future?” I asked her.

“When I see the future, it’s usually white, when I see the past, it’s gray and when it’s neither, I see black a-and I call that the dark world,” she answered.

“I see,” I said.

It was convincing because the status window never lie. If what she saw wasn’t the future or the past, then it was obvious.

‘My past life?’

It could be something that the woman’s mental illness had created, but what I recalled right now was the past life that Kim Hyun-Sung had experienced. It could be a parallel world or it could just be her imagination, but…

‘It’s possible.’

This woman looked like she already knew me and knew exactly what my attribute was. It didn’t seem like she had realized that this was her first life, but if the dark world she saw was the past life, then it was likely that she was a regressor, too. The problem was about me…

‘Did I survive?’

I did have a past life, and I thought that I was the least likely to survive. During my past life, Kim Hyun-Sung probably wasn’t a regressor, so I most likely didn’t follow him and I must have continued to stay with Park Deok-Gu. Kim Hyun-Sung had already saved my life twice in the tutorial dungeon and if it wasn’t for him, then Lee Ki-Young wouldn’t have been able to go to the continent.

‘Also… ’

Not only that, but based on how that woman was acting, I guess I was somewhat of a

competent person. I had no idea what exactly happened, but I felt strange. However, all of this only applied under the condition that whatever the woman saw in her past life was all true. I couldn't confirm her information just yet, but getting intel wasn't a bad thing.

"Did you see anything else? Actually, what did you see about me?" I asked.

"I couldn't see a lot of things. I apologize, but my attribute doesn't allow me to see the things I want to see. I can sometimes see the future and the past I want to see, but when it comes to the dark world…"

'I wonder if there's a penalty… '

"The things I see in the dark world are either fragmentary or memorable things. O-Of course what I saw most was being with you, Master… no, the majority of the memories are with you," Yuno said.

"What kind of memories are they exactly?" I asked.

"I-I'm a bit embarrassed to say, but th-that's…"

I noticed her quietly looking behind me and that was when I understood the shaman's reaction.

'Lee Ki-Young, you bastard! What the hell did you do?!'

Based on the status window, she was only 20 years old. I didn't know exactly when I met her, but I couldn't help but awkwardly laugh at the ridiculous situation.

"It's okay, you don't have to say it because I have an idea. Let me change my question, then. How did the two of us meet in the dark world? Were you able to see that?"

"Y-Yes, since it's related to you, I could somewhat see it. I can't tell you the details because it's in fragments, but I remember going out to find you," she answered.

"What?"

"In the dark world, I sometimes saw a future where I was with you and I felt confused because of how happy I looked being with you. I even saw myself being miserable when I saw myself with you. I felt miserable when I first arrived here, so I

understood that feeling, but the me in the dark world seemed really childish and I even sympathized with you, Master. I was stupid enough that I wanted to reject my future with you, but at the same time, I pitied you," she explained.

"I see," I said.

"You were badly injured during that time, so I devoted myself to treating you and I remember spending a lot of time with you, Master," she added.

"You saved my life," I commented.

"I-It was nothing. Anyway, the scene I saw after you had almost fully recovered was…"

"…"

"…"

"The scene you saw was?" I asked.

"You were choking me," she answered.

"What?"

"You were choking me in the memory that I saw. I didn't see what happened after, but I clearly remember what you said to me," Yuno said.

For some reason, I felt nervous.

"What did I say?" I asked.

"I don't need your useless pity, you dirty bitch. All of you are the same. That was what you said and… that's how you and I ended up together. In the next memory I saw, a lot of time has passed and that's how we ended up together in the dark world. *Hehe*…" she answered.

'What?'

I couldn't understand how she and I ended up being together there. I felt flustered after hearing her story to the point that I was kind of confused. After calming myself

down, I recalled every detail that she told me and it helped me organize my thoughts.

First, the shaman could see the future and the past. Unlike the shaman in the past who could see just the future and the past, the shaman in the second life could see her past life.

Second, she couldn't see the future and the past whenever she wanted. The visions would happen randomly.

Third, there was a limit to how much of her past life she was able to see. Based on the situation, she could only see the memories that were engraved into her spirit.

Fourth, I wasn't sure why, but the shaman in this life wanted to be my servant. It could be a side effect of seeing too much into the past.

Fifth, in her past life, she saved Lee Ki-Young's life.

Sixth, the shaman in the first life felt confused when she saw her future with me. She denied and refused her future.

Seventh, despite that, the shaman in the first life pitied me, so she decided to save the human named Lee Ki-Young. I wasn't sure how or where she found me, but the shaman of the past saved me as I was dying and took me to her home.

Lastly, the Lee Ki-Young of the past choked the shaman of the past when he recovered. After some time passed, the shaman of the past discovered that she couldn't change her future and ended up having the same result as her visions.

~

Yuno tried to change her future but failed.

If I were to exclude everything and explained the basics of the situation, I had basically backstabbed my benefactor and now, no matter how much I thought about it, there was no excuse for being such a piece of shit.

'That bastard was a total piece of shit… '

The Lee Ki-Young of the past life was the perfect example of a human scumbag and he was a piece of trash that couldn't be salvaged.

'That... shitty bastard... '

CHAPTER 121
DARK WORLD (2)

'That… shitty bastard… '

I tried cursing in my head, but I thought that the situation itself wasn't all that bad. I did feel bad about having this kind of thought in the current situation, but if all my assumptions were correct, it meant that I had gained an ally that was just as strong as Cha Hee-Ra and Kim Hyun-Sung.

'And one that's completely loyal to me… '

The perfect ally.

At this point, I was relieved that I didn't choose summoner as my job.

'A new type of summon… '

Not only was the shaman in front of me the owner of a large guild in Celia, but she had a different type of magic power that allowed her to see the past and the future. Even though I couldn't really evaluate her powers, when considering just her stats and potential, she was more useful than Jung Ha-Yan and naturally, the corner of my lips went up.

'I guess it's in my nature to be trash.'

Naturally, I had to confirm a few things before completely trusting her to be my ally and I was also curious about other things. I had no choice but to talk to the shaman that was looking at me anxiously.

"I'll ask a few more questions. How did I die in the dark world?"

It was what I was most curious about.

"I don't know," Yuno answered.

“Are you saying that you can’t see it?” I asked.

“Yes, I can’t see it. It’s probably because I died before you did, Master,” she answered.

“Is that so? How did you die?”

“I died for you, Master. I couldn’t see it clearly, but I do know that I didn’t have any regrets about my final moments,” she answered.

“*Hm…* then I’m curious as to how we got to know each other,” I said.

“I’m sorry, but what do you mean?” she asked.

“It’s like I said. You already know that I’m able to see other people’s information and thanks to you opening your information to me, I was able to check your stats…” I answered.

“Yes,” she said.

“You’re a mage with magic stats of 96, a legendary-ranked job and attribute. Actually, maybe sorcerer is a better description,” I said.

“You’re right,” she said.

“I’m not certain since the dark world you speak of is something I can’t see, but I’m sure I wasn’t strong in that world either,” I told her.

“That’s not true. You were braver than anyone else…”

“That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m simply talking about physical stats. Am I right?” I asked.

“Yes, that’s true,” she answered.

“The question is—why didn’t you resist me? You said that you saw me choking you, but the explanation regarding that was missing and it applies even more under the condition that the two of us in the dark world met a lot later than our present selves,” I explained.

“That’s true. I didn’t see the exact date, but I know that you and I of the dark world

met two to three years later from today," she said.

"So we met when you were 22 years old," I commented.

"Yes."

"Well, it doesn't really matter when we met because the point is that you're a lot stronger than me," I told her.

"Th-That's not possible," Yuno stuttered.

"I'm right. To be frank, if you wanted to kill me, I would've already died both here and in the dark world. How come the Yuno in the dark world didn't kill me?" I asked.

I couldn't help but be curious. I had no idea why, but I had apparently been abusing the shaman in the past life and her mental state wasn't in the best condition for her to say that she had agreed to be abused. I considered the possibility that I might have used a potion or some other method, but I was sure that it wouldn't work on a strong person like her. The shaman could have had many opportunities to escape from me and despite that, she stayed; she must have had a reason for staying.

The shaman in front of me must've agreed to my question because she slowly nodded and I realized that I had asked a key question.

"That's…"

"That's?"

"It's because the master of the dark world was someone I loved," Yuno said.

Her unexpected answer caused me to tap the chair arm for a moment and she continued to talk. "I can't tell you the details because I can't feel the emotions myself, but the me in the dark world definitely looked like she was in love with you."

"Did you grow fond of me while treating me?" I asked.

"That's a possibility, but I believe that it was destiny that pulled us together," she said.

"I see…"

“I started becoming more worried about you and my head was filled with you more and more. Of course, I started spending more time with you and while I was watching us in the dark world, I felt like I could feel my emotions toward you that I couldn’t help but be touched,” Yuno said.

‘Am I a womanizer or something?’

I had never thought of myself as handsome. Although my eyes were small, I wouldn't say that I was terrible in the looks department, but it wasn't enough to say that I was a handsome man.The word *handsome* suited our lovely Kim Hyun-Sung more than me. He was strong, had large eyes, a sharp nose, and very pretty lips. On top of that, he was fit, so it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he was almost perfect.

‘His personality isn’t that bad either… ’

Kim Hyun-Sung was the most suitable person to be in love with. My thoughts did wander off, but basically, it was difficult for me to understand why these types of women were attracted to me.

‘…’

For Jung Ha-Yan, I made her like me because she had been forced into a corner, but for the others, I had no idea why they were obsessed with me. To make things worse, I hadn’t even done anything significant in my past life and yet a competent woman like her stayed beside me. Of course, it wasn’t confirmed that this was truly the case.

‘At this point, maybe I have an attribute related to that or something.’

I thought that maybe the words *charmed* or *seduction* would be written in the description of the attribute.

“I think that was the reason why I was able to accept everything about you, Master,” she said.

“What about me? Did I love you?” I asked.

“I don’t think so, but I’m sure that I was one of the people you could rely on emotionally. Yes, I’m sure of it,” she answered.

I didn’t know what the Lee Ki-Young of the past life felt, but she may be right. When I

lightly nodded as if I agreed with her, I saw her bowing again.

“I somewhat understand,” I told her.

“Th-Then…”

“Your explanation makes sense. The fact that you revealed your information and status window to me was very impressive and I can see that you’re really able to see the future, past, and the dark world, so there’s no reason for me to confirm it myself. In my eyes, I can see the attribute you possess,” I explained.

“*Oh…*”

“Still, it’s not enough,” I added.

“Excuse me?” Yuno asked.

“I’m a very suspicious person. I’m curious as to why you brought up the dark world to me and told me about yourself in that world and I’m wondering whether you’ve been telling me exactly what you saw. The Lee Ki-Young in the dark world and I aren’t the same people, just like how you in the dark world aren't the same as you are right now. Of course, I won’t deny the fact that we may have been influenced by them, but all this sounds ridiculous to me. Do you understand?” I asked.

“O-Of course,” she answered.

She was trembling. She seemed a bit anxious and looked as if she was worried that I was going to kick her out.

“That’s not the only thing. There’s no guarantee that everything you’ve told me is true. I’m also worried that you’re only telling me what you want to tell me. I’m not sure why you’re calling me master and honestly, it makes me feel uncomfortable. How many people in the world would actually believe this kind of nonsense?”I asked.

“*Ooh…*”

“What should I do so that I can believe you?” I asked.

“Th-That’s…”

“The dark world you’ve told me does nothing for me and it’s not enough for me to be your master. What needs to be done in order for us to have the relationship you want?” I asked Yuno.

It was a shitty deal, but this was the right thing to do.

“I-If you want, I-I can do whatever you want,” she answered.

“That’s not the kind of thing I want because if we do establish that kind of relationship, what’s yours will eventually be mine, or is the fact that you want to have a relationship just all talk?” I asked her.

“N-No. E-Everything that I have belongs to you, Master. I-It’s true,” she answered.

“Is there a way for me to control you? Actually, have you thought of a way where I can accept you without any worries?” I asked.

“Of course. Th-There is a way because you had always been a suspicious person. I do have a way,” she said.

Yuno looked a bit excited.

“I’d like it if you explained it to me,” I said.

“It’s an enchantment,” she answered.

“An enchantment?”

“Yes. It’s an enchantment that’ll help you possess me and I can transfer the ownership of my body to you, Master,” she explained.

‘Is that even possible?’

I had never heard of this before. I tried recalling similar spells, but nothing came to mind, so it must be an enchantment that only belonged to her. It would make sense if she prepared this enchantment just for this day.

“It’s a type of enchantment where I suppress myself and after connecting my body to your mind…”

“I understand what you’re saying, but…”

I was worried that the opposite might happen, but I didn’t want to think about that possibility. Just like how she desperately wanted me to be her master, I also wanted this item named Kasugano Yuno. I quickly wanted to take her in my hands without having to do something so complicated like having a conversation and even though I didn’t like gambling, I would gain a lot just by throwing the dice once.

“Let’s see it,” I told her.

“Okay. Then I’ll quickly start the ritual,” she said.

I saw Yuno smiling brightly with her eyes closed and even though I couldn’t see her exact expression, she looked as if she had gotten everything that she wanted. It was as if she had just won the lottery.

I did flinch a bit when she took out a small dagger from her pocket, but then I saw her cutting her arm because her blood must have been necessary as a medium in order to complete the enchantment.

‘I wonder if it’s similar to alchemy… ’

“Please wait a moment… it’s almost done. Almost!” she yelled.

“You can take your time,” I told her.

The way she hurriedly drew the enchantment circle on the ground was a sight to see. Despite me telling her that she could take her time, she looked like she was in a hurry. I considered myself a professional when it came to magic and alchemy, but when I looked at what she was doing, I couldn’t understand it. But there was one thing that I was sure of—this enchantment was a lot harder than I thought. Even as a high-ranking sorcerer, she barely managed to complete the enchantment since she used her blood as a medium. By the time she was done, her face was drenched in sweat. I didn’t know about anything else, but I knew that the spell was going to be really effective.

I watched her while feeling nervous and excited at the same time. She stood in the middle of the enchantment circle and Yuno turned her gaze to me before kneeling.

“Please come here,” she told me.

When I slowly walked toward her, a faint light spread from the enchantment circle that she drew. Juliena didn't react to it so I knew that at the least, the enchantment wasn't going to harm me. After the faint red light enveloped her, the shaman spoke again with a very satisfied expression. "I-I'm sorry but your blood…"

When Yuno looked up with her mouth open, I unknowingly cut myself and dripped my blood into her mouth.

"The person in front of me wants me to offer everything I have. This spell will be an unbreakable blood pact and no one can come between us," she said.

Suddenly, there was a flash of light and for some reason, I thought that I had to grab her head and when I did, I saw a fragmented scene that I couldn't understand. It was the scene where I was choking her. It was the dark world that Yuno saw.

'I don't need your useless pity, you dirty bitch. All of you are the same.'

'Ohh… you poor man.'

'Do you really think that you have the right to pity me?'

For a brief moment, I saw her hugging my body tightly while crying.

Whoooooosh!

When I opened my eyes, I saw the enchantment circle being absorbed into her body.

"It was successful, Master," she said.

She looked really happy, which made me feel bad.

'I feel like a total trash… '

If the Lee Ki-Young from the past life saw this, I was sure that he would yell at me.

'You're a piece of shit, you bastard!'

I couldn’t help but feel ashamed.

CHAPTER 122
DARK WORLD (3)

I couldn't help but feel ashamed, but I had to finish this.

"I'm thinking about testing a few things," I said.

"Of… course. I look forward to working with you," Yuno said.

After getting rid of her excited expression, she slowly spoke and for some reason, she looked happy.

"I don't have any ill-will," I told her.

"I know and I also know that you're only punishing me because you treasure me," she said.

"I can't say that it's a punishment, but it's up to you on how you want to interpret it… but first, you won't be able to breathe starting now," I said.

"…"

I saw her eyes wide open as she looked at me. When she didn't show any reaction, I thought about whether this shaman was a fraud or not, but when I heard her voice again, I realized that I had made a mistake.

"You need to use your mana as you say it," she told me.

"…"

Naturally, I felt embarrassed. When I opened my mouth again, I saw her taking a deep breath.

"You won't be able to breathe," I said.

A large amount of mana started to flow out of me almost immediately and even

though I didn't expect this much mana to flow out, it was a really good trade considering that I had complete control of her body. A frown appeared on Yuno's face and the way she coughed while grabbing her neck showed that she definitely wasn't acting. The way she reached her hand out and rolled around told me how much pain she was in.

"Mas… ter… *cough*…"

She seemed to be struggling as her body refused the air regardless of her will. Naturally, she started crying and her tongue stretched out as if she was longing for air. When I thought that she would really run out of air, I had no choice but to speak because I didn't want her to die here.

"You'll be able to breathe starting now."

The test was over and the reasonable contract between me and her was completed successfully. She spoke after taking in the air she needed. "Th-Thank you, Master."

I wasn't sure why she was thanking me, but the enchantment she had placed on herself was now complete and on top of that, it was perfect. I didn't lose anything through this contract, but if I had to explain one thing, I had to be responsible for her.

'It should be fine, right?'

If the scene I saw earlier was shown to me before the enchantment, then I wouldn't have done something so troublesome as this. I wasn't sure why I was able to see that scene, but I didn't think that it was because of the enchantment, so it was probably best to think that it was a momentary error that occurred while her body and my mind were in the middle of connecting to each other. The look on the shaman's face as she hugged me tight and the fact that she saved my life were all true.

When I helped Yuno stand up, I saw her looking at me with an unknown expression. She looked as if she didn't know what to do while being happy at the same time. Even though I had this feeling earlier, I felt even worse right now.

'I'll treat you nicely from now on.'

I realized that my actions were far worse than what Lee Ki-Young of the past life had done and it felt like I had driven an innocent person into an indescribable pit of evil. I felt even worse after recalling that look on her face in the dark world.

'Shit… '

But it was a reasonable decision and the result wasn't that bad because she was the happiest about it.

'Of course, I'm justifying it… '

Thinking about how I had gained an ally that I could really trust was the best way to get rid of my sense of guilt.

"I'm not sure what I should say…" I said.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

"Thanks," I told her.

"Th-That's not… it's not necessary," she said.

When I pushed back the shaman's long hair, I noticed her face turning red and when a light smile appeared on her face, I became flustered because she seemed like she wanted to drop to the floor, but giving her a small reward was the right thing to do.

"Master…" she called.

When I quietly put my face close to hers, she closed her eyes and when I lightly kissed her forehead, she fell apart.

"Thank you, thank you," she said.

"It can't be compared to the loyalty you've shown me and it's not much compared to the warmth you've given me in the dark world," I told her.

"*Oh…*"

"It was only for a moment, but I saw what you saw," I told her.

"What?"

"That moment. Are you the one that told me that you pitied me?" I asked.

“That’s right. H-How did you…”

“I don’t understand it either, but as you said, it might really be destiny,” I said.

She looked extremely happy, but I only said it just to make her feel better.

That was when I heard a ruckus outside…

‘Jung Ha-Yan?’

I guess when I made physical contact with the shaman, the information went straight to Jung Ha-Yan. I thought that she was doing well enduring it, but I guess that she couldn’t bear it anymore and came up here.

‘Ugh… ’

I still had other things I needed to do with this woman, but I couldn’t just leave Jung Ha-Yan alone.

“By the way, have you told others about me?” I asked.

“I haven’t,” she answered.

“That’s a relief. Then let’s stop here for today,” I told her.

“If that’s what you wish.”

“Of course, our relationship should be kept a secret,” I said.

“I understand,” she said.

Seeing her nod as if she was used to it made me think that something similar must have happened in our past lives and after I nodded, I immediately opened the door and noticed how easily I was able to open it compared to earlier.

I thought about how I should make Jung Ha-Yan feel better, but the person I saw was a man I had never seen before. He was tall and had a sword at his waist.

‘A katana?’

I was speechless when I saw a katana on a medieval-based continent. I thought that maybe he had it customized, but I didn't have the time to think because my attention was on the man that was looking down at me.

'What's with him?'

I saw his information after using Mind's Eyes.

[Checking Player Ito Sota's Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Ito Sota]

[Title - Wind of Celia]

[Age - 28]

[Nature - Cautious Strategist]

[Job - Samurai - Legendary Rank]

[Job Effect - Acquired basic swordsmanship knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired intermediate swordsmanship knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced swordsmanship knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced magic application knowledge]

[Stats]

[Strength - 81/Below epic growth limit]

[Agility - 99/Above legendary growth limit]

[Stamina - 61/Below rare growth limit]

[Intelligence - 89/Below epic growth limit]

[Endurance - 66/Below rare growth limit]

[Luck - 34/Below average growth limit]

[Magic - 75/Above epic growth limit]

[Gear - Wind Blade - Epic Rank]

[Attribute - Wind Blade - Legendary Rank]

[Overall Review - He's a legendary-ranked samurai. His overall stats are high, but his agility stat is what stands out the most. His slightly low endurance is his weakness, but it's not really necessary since he's an agility-based warrior. It breaks my heart to see his low stamina, but his legendary-ranked job and attribute do stand out. The only similarity between you two is your nature. Please work harder.]

'How come the people I meet are monsters?'

An agility-based swordsman… I wasn't sure who he was, but he didn't look ordinary. There was no way an ordinary person would have these kinds of stats in the first place and I was sure that he was either on the same level or stronger than Cha Hee-Ra. I thought that as the guild master of a guild, his stats weren't lacking, and funnily enough, his nature was the same as mine. Despite that, I thought that it was unfair because he possessed so much power compared to me.

He spoke when I tried to walk past him.

"…"

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young?"

I felt the man lightly grab my shoulder.

"Mr. Ito, what's wrong?"

Naturally, the lovely shaman became wary of the man, but the man kept looking at me while smiling.

'This is annoying… '

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Ito Sota, the guild master of the Yamato Guild."

"…"

Naturally, I became speechless and even though it was only for a moment, I recalled the terrorist attack that happened in Lindel. The explosion, the arrows, and the swords that were flying toward me weren't exactly a traumatic memory, but it was a frustrating one. But I gulped it all and shook his hand because I couldn't show him that I was shaken up.

'It's annoying… '

This place was safe and since disputes weren't allowed here, there was no way that this guy would harm me. My trustworthy shaman was behind him and Juliena was at my waist, so she would be able to block at least one of his surprise attacks.

'Although it's not likely considering his agility stat… '

I thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a conversation with him. Meeting like this was fate and the reason I came here was to officially file a complaint regarding the Yamato Guild, so I should try to get as much intel as possible.

"I guess you've seen me from somewhere," I said.

"I haven't, but I've heard a lot about you since you were the center of the terrorist attack that happened in Lindel," he answered.

'This bastard… '

It was a sight to see a small smile appear on his face. I thought that he was going to pretend not to know about the terrorist attack, but he looked calmer than I thought.

'A cautious strategist?'

It was probably because we had the same nature.

“I was really surprised when I heard the news since it’s a terrorist attack that happened in the middle of a free city. Our cities may be different, but since we’re both from Earth, I had been very worried,” Sota said.

“I see. Thank you for worrying about me,” I said.

“But you know…”

“Yes?”

“There are rumors saying that Lindel has judged us as the ones responsible for the terrorist attack,” he said.

‘So what?’

It was a sensitive topic to talk about right now and I thought that it would be best to discuss this with Hee-Ra noona.

“I think it’ll be best to talk about this at a later time since this isn’t the best time to talk about it,” I suggested.

When I lightly turned my head, I felt him grabbing my shoulder again. Naturally, Kasugano Yuno stepped up and I heard her quiet, yet determined voice. “He’s my guest…”

“*Ooh,* it’s nothing. I just wanted to talk more with him,” Sota said.

“Please refrain from doing anything rude,” she told him.

That was when I felt bloodthirstiness…

‘Shit… ’

I guess I wasn’t the only one that felt it because our surroundings were instantly filled with white smoke and when I looked to the side, I saw Kasugano Yuno quickly casting a spell. I saw that bastard Sota’s face and saw one corner of his lips going up. I didn’t think that he would do something crazy here, but since he was the one behind the terrorist attack in Lindel, I couldn’t help but think that he wanted to get rid of me once and for all while we were both here.

Kasugano Yuno. No matter how strong the shaman was, there was a limit when it came to one-on-one battles. If it had been the samurai that was standing in front of us, it wouldn't take him long to break her shield and then cut my head off.

'Hyun-Sung… '

For some reason, I missed being in Kim Hyun-Sung's warm arms.

Buzzzzzzz!

The moment Juliena naturally jumped out from me, I saw Sota maintaining his smile.

"*Oh…*"

Something's wrong…

"Juliena, no!" I screamed.

The moment I screamed, Juliena had already pierced through the neck of the swordsman that was standing beside Sota.

'A cautious strategist?'

The situation was the perfect checkmate.

'Shit!'

The man fell to the ground while making choking noises.

Ito Sota grabbed the handle of his sword and mumbled. "Oh dear… what did you do, Mr. Ki-Young? You suddenly threw your sword at him while we're inside the Holy Empire's castle in the holy and glorious city of Benigoa. *Pfft*… did one of your favorite subordinates die? *Hehehe*…"

"…"

"Would it be okay if I filed an official complaint regarding this?" he asked.

"…"

“If not… can I accept it as you declaring war against the Yamato Guild?” he asked.

Our nature wasn’t the only thing that was similar. The way we acted was very similar as well. I couldn’t help but realize it the moment he looked at me with that teasing look on his face.

CHAPTER 123
BACK OF THE HEAD

I couldn't help but realize it the moment he looked at me with that taunting look on his face.

'That's annoying… '

I wasn't sure if it was because he was the same as me, but the moment I saw his face, frustration filled me because I never imagined that I would fall for such a simple trap.

'He knew about Juliena… '

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that he used Juliena because he knew that she would move on her own whenever I was in danger. Even though one of his men died, compared to what was going to happen, it was nothing, no, it was difficult to tell whether that man really was one of his men or not. I wasn't sure if he had planned this all along or if he planned it the moment we met, but I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that I fell for his trap. However, it wasn't over yet. It was ridiculous how I fell for his trap, but even Kasugano Yuno could confirm that it happened all of a sudden and I was sure that it would help if I explained Juliena's skills to the investigators.

'I guess I have no choice but to explain Juliena's skills… '

It was a bit frustrating that I had to do that, but I was willing to do a bad trade as long as I could get back at him. Of course, I knew that this wasn't going to end here. If he had already made connections with the higher-ups of the Holy Empire, then there was the possibility there would be a conflict and if a trial opened, I would likely be at a disadvantage. No matter what kind of excuse I gave, the fact that I had killed one of his men wouldn't change.

If his nature really was similar to mine, Sota must have already planned everything out, and even if he hadn't planned things out yet, he would soon start planning for the big picture.

'Because I would've done the same thing… '

The one thing that he didn't add to his calculations was the lovely shaman, Kasugano Yuno, who was taking my side, but it was likely that he had a way to take care of her as well.

While I was organizing my thoughts, I heard his voice. "What will you do? One of my precious men died inside the Holy Empire's castle."

"Please stop it with the nonsense, Mr. Ito. Your subordinate was the one that became bloodthirsty and threatened my guest, so this can be considered self-defense," Yuno said.

"That's surprising, Miss Shaman. I didn't think that our relationship was that bad," he said.

"I have no influence over your thoughts. Your subordinate threatened my guest and that's a fact that can't be denied," she said.

"I'll be grateful if you could explain exactly how he threatened him, no, even if he did threaten your guest, that's no reason to throw his sword like that. No matter how you look at it, we're the victims. I don't expect you to take sides, but you'll have to at least decide who's the victim and who's the assailant because that's going to be helpful for you. It'll also help Yozora who's under your command," he said.

"You…"

Kasugano Yuto was an ally I could trust. Sota kept on enticing her, but of course it wasn't going to work since she and her guild, Yozora, were going to defend me with everything they had, but I didn't know how to fix this situation.

When I glanced at Juliena, it seemed like she knew that she had done something wrong because she started floating around me. She looked meek. After placing her at my waist again, I continued talking. "First, I would like to apologize."

"This is something that cannot be fixed with a simple apology, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

"This weapon, Juliena, the Cursed Sword, is an ego sword and reacts whenever her master is in danger," I explained.

"*Ohhh,* I see. I didn't know that a weapon like that exists…" Sota said.

"That's surprising because I thought you knew," I told him.

"I did hear that an adventurer in Lindel had obtained a legendary-ranked weapon, but I never knew that it was this weapon," he answered.

He definitely knew about it. I didn't know whether he heard it from someone else or confirmed it himself, but I was certain that the annoying bastard was the one behind the Lindel terrorist attack.

'Otherwise, then there is no reason for him to do this to me… '

"I don't know why your guild member threatened me…"

"He has never threatened you," Sota said, interrupting me.

"No, I'm sure he did. If this case was taken to court, I'll testify that your guild member threatened my guest and obviously, my guild members that are here will say the same thing," Yuno said.

'Your master is happy! Yuno!'

"It doesn't matter whether you give that testimony or not, but… something is a bit strange. Right now, he definitely seems like he's controlling his sword, and also, just like your testimony, even if my subordinate really did threaten him first, there's no reason that my loyal subordinate should die for it. I'm not sure what he did to create the bloodthirsty atmosphere, but maybe the murderer that killed my subordinate's comrade looked really similar to Mr. Ki-Young and that's why he was filled with anger," Sota explained.

"…"

"And you threw your sword just for that reason… it's a very unfortunate situation. Not being able to control your sword is also a sin and the more I think about it, the more heartbreaking it is," he said.

'This bastard… '

I guess he was really determined because he kept focusing on how he was the victim

and I realized that he was trying to frame me by making me the assailant.

'Should I just fight him head-on?'

I could injure myself as well. If I used the sword that his subordinate had and stabbed my stomach with it, then it would clearly be self-defense, but the problem was that the man in front of me wasn't going to let me do it so easily. As the person that had an agility stat of 99, he may not even allow me to stab myself. My choices were limited and even though I didn't want to be a parrot that constantly shouted about framing people, I thought that it wouldn't be bad to at least try that method.

"Mr. Sota, you're the one that grabbed me while I was on my way back, and even though this happened all of a sudden, I'm starting to get suspicious of whether you sacrificed one of your men because you had something else planned or not," I said to him.

"That's not the case. Your imagination's really active," he said.

"It's not my imagination and I only said what I saw," I said.

"You can explain your useless conspiracy theories to the empire's investigators. Since a person died within the castle, we should go through with the procedure. *Oh,* there they are," Sota said.

He seemed calm, but I was sure that he was upset because he saw the armed guards of the castle walking toward us. I was also frustrated by the fact that I fell for his trap when he tried to make himself look like the victim.

"What's going on?" the guard asked.

The shaman was the first one that answered, then the bastard and then me.

"A member of the Yamato Guild threatened Mr. Lee Ki-Young and he defended himself by piercing his sword through the man's neck."

"To be more accurate, he wasn't threatened. It seems like there was a misunderstanding and then he responded with his sword."

"My weapon reacts whenever there is a threat and I can show you the sword's information to explain how this happened. The fact that I got threatened by a

member of the Yamato Guild is true and Miss Kasugano Yuno and her guild members will testify to that," I said.

Obviously, the two sides gave different information.

After the guards whispered to each other, they ran somewhere, so I thought that they were going to call their superior officer. Sure enough, moments later I saw a man dressed in ornate clothes running toward us and I guess this wasn't part of his jurisdiction because he was running. The situation was obviously getting worse. I was sure that this was what Ito Sota wanted and when I started thinking about how this complicated situation was going to unfold, I started getting a headache.

'I'm sure they'll start the investigation soon.'

Naturally, I was going to be the suspect. No matter what the reason was, what kind of case it was, or who started the fight, a person had died inside the Holy Empire Benigoa's castle. Even though we were free citizens, we were still influenced by the Holy Empire. Considering how the empire didn't allow conflicts between guilds, I was sure that I was going to be treated like a murder suspect. This was the procedure that Sota was talking about.

As expected, I saw a man wearing an ornate uniform walking toward me.

'Imperial people… '

"My name is Carlton and I'm part of the Holy Order that's affiliated with the empire. I'm sorry, but you'll have to come with me for a moment," he said.

'I knew it.'

It was annoying, but it was okay so far. Our testimonies were different, so it was likely that Ito Sota was going to become the assailant as well. I was certain that he was being questioned as the victim, but as long as they had my shaman's testimony, I was sure that the rumors about me being the assailant would die down sooner or later.

'On top of that… '

Based on the attitude of the man named Carlton, I didn't think that he really considered me as the actual suspect yet.

'Rather, he's being respectful… '

Of course, it didn't change the fact that he could interrogate me after being imprisoned, but I could flip the situation around in my favor.

"Okay, I understand."

I responded and just as I started walking, I heard Kasugano Yuno's voice as she lowered her head quietly.

"Do not move."

"Huh?"

"If you take one step with my guest, I will make sure that your bodies will not be able to die nor live and you will have to crawl on the floor. I told you that those people were the ones that threatened my guest," she said.

The ground started shaking and the unknown magic circle I saw earlier started to spread in all directions. When I opened my eyes, I saw eyes that resembled a black hole. She obviously possessed a large amount of mana and even I could feel that it was enough to turn everything around into dust. I couldn't help but gulp.

"Shaman…"

Even that bastard Sota had grabbed the handle of his sword as he gulped because he knew that the situation was going to explode any minute now.

"Remove your dirty hands from my guest," Yuno demanded.

"…"

"I told you to remove them!"

'This isn't good… '

It was fine for her to defend me, but I didn't like causing a ruckus.

Even Carlton of the Holy Order looked shocked and he drew his sword while frowning at us.

“I-I’m just trying to act according to the procedure and this type of magic is prohibited within the castle. Even if you’re a shaman…”

“I won’t say it again,” she said.

At this point, I had to step up.

“It’ll be fine, Miss Yuno. I think it’ll be best to follow the basic procedure for now.”

“…”

When her mana started fading, the shaking that resembled an earthquake stopped.

“But… Mr. Ki-Young…” she said.

“I’m sure it’s nothing and you just need to testify based on what you saw,” I told her.

The truth was bound to come out anyway.

‘Even though the world isn’t based on the truth, right?’

Sota’s expression was saying the same thing as he smiled while looking at me. Regardless of the results, it felt like he was trying to pin me as the culprit.

I immediately heard an answer as I spoke while walking.

“Will I be imprisoned while the investigation is ongoing?”

“You won’t because it’s just a procedural investigation. Naturally, I’ll try to be as considerate as possible to make it convenient for you and I hope you’ll understand that you’ll be limited to where you can go,” Carlton replied.

“Yes, I understand,” I said.

“The Yamato Guild and everyone that had been there will be questioned,” he said.

“Their words will probably be different from mine, right?” I asked.

“I’m sorry but that would most likely be the case. Since it’s a murder case…”

“I see. Is it possible to testify through an agent?” I asked.

“Yes, of course,” he answered.

“Okay, let’s go.”

* * *

“*Achoo*.”

“Did you catch a cold?”

“No, unnie. Sorry, I just sneezed all of a sudden.”

“I know you’ve been working a little too hard these days… it’s nice to work hard, but you need to take care of yourself first. Well, I brought you here so that you can take a break, so make sure to take this opportunity and rest. By the way, what do you think about the capital?”

“I think it’s nice to live in. It’s not bad for my first visit and everyone looks so energetic. I never imagined that the Holy Empire’s culture would be this advanced, so I was surprised at how organized this place is.”

“I knew you were going to say that.”

“By the way unnie, you’ve done a great job with your make-up today.”

“*Oh jeez…*”

“Or maybe it’s because your skin has improved. Unnie, are you dating someone right now?”

“I’m so busy that I don’t have time for that… actually, it seems like you’re the one that’s dating someone. Don’t you think it’s time you told me who he is? I already know everything, but it would be nice if you officially introduced him to me…”

“I’ll tell you once our relationship has developed more. Oppa is going through some stuff.”

“I guess. Oh, we’ve arrived.”

“…”

“…”

“Members of the Black Swan Guild, welcome to the Holy Empire. It has been a while, Miss Park Yeon-Joo.”

“Yes, it’s been a while.”

“Haha, I see a new face as well. If you don’t mind, could you tell me her name?”

“Of course. Ji-Hye?” Park Yeon-Joo said.

“Okay, unnie. Hello, everyone. My name is Lee Ji-Hye and I joined the Black Swan Guild after the tutorial dungeon. It’s an honor to meet the citizens of the honorable and great Holy Empire. Nice to meet you,” she said.

CHAPTER 124
SOULMATE (1)

'It's more comfortable than I thought… '

Despite the fact they were suspecting me of killing a Yamato Guildmember, my situation was quite comfortable. I was lying on a comfortable bed instead of the cold floor and the food they gave me was really good, which was great because I had been worried about how I was going to have to eat the same food criminals ate. Based on how they were treating me, I couldn't help but acknowledge that Cha Hee-Ra and Kasugano Yuno were much more influential than I thought because it was obvious that if I was just an ordinary peasant, they would've chopped off my head without even holding a trial. As the Mercenary Queen's Lover and the shaman's guest, I had enough influence to exonerate myself.

'That's why power is great… '

However, I couldn't feel relieved about the situation. Of course, it wasn't likely that I would lose my head since showing hostility toward the Mercenary Queen and the shaman at the same time meant that the empire's forces would be reduced and no one wanted that. In other words, protecting me was more important than punishing the regular members of the Yamato Guild. But it was even more important to find out what Ito Sota was up to. While the severity of my punishment or the amount of fine I would have to pay depended on how much information that bastard gave them, ultimately, I didn't have to worry about losing my head.

There was one thing I was worried about though…

'Having a diplomatic disadvantage… '

This issue could be disputed depending on how it was interpreted.

When I looked up after finishing my meal, I saw Cha Hee-Ra looking strangely unhappy.

"I honestly feel good," she said.

"*Huh?*"

"That bastard was the one that got killed, not you, right?" she asked.

"I'm surprised that you're not scolding me," I told her.

"I'm not in the greatest mood because my plan got ruined and I'm even angrier because you went to the shaman's room without saying anything and got involved in that situation. I'm sure you know, but I find one's image to be very important. The reason why I feel good is that whether it was intentional or not, you killed one of the members of the Yamato Guild, that was rather energizing…" Cha Hee-Ra explained.

"Thanks, I guess…" I said.

"What's your relationship with the shaman?" she asked.

"…"

"I thought that woman would obviously stand on Yamato's side, but I never imagined that she would constantly testify that you were innocent. You haven't been keeping in contact with her without me knowing, right? If that's the case, I might just become a little sad," she said.

"It's up to you whether you want to believe me or not, but yesterday was the first time I met her," I told her.

"You know that things won't work out well if you lie to me, right?" she asked.

"Why would I lie to you? Do you remember Kasugano Yuno crying when she first saw me?" I asked.

"Of course…"

"That woman can see into the future," I said.

"What the…"

"However, she can't see whatever she wants to see and even if she does see it, she can only see it for a short period of time, but I'm certain that she can see into the future," I told her.

“You’re not joking, right?” she asked.

“I saw it myself. If you just think about it, the answer is there. If not, how could a 16-year-old girl build a large guild in four years? I also have an idea as to why that woman is obsessed with me. In the future, that woman and I end would end up having a connection,” I explained.

“Bullshit.”

“That was the reason why that woman cried while looking at me and the reason why she’s working so hard to defend me. It’s up to you whether you’ll believe me or not, Hee-Ra noona,” I said.

She looked a bit frustrated and after tapping on the table, Cha Hee-Ra spoke while looking at me. “*Sigh*… you bastard, you’re just a lump of pheromone aren’t you?”

“You know you’re the only one for me, noona,” I told her.

“It’s not good to grovel too much, darling,” she said.

A small frown appeared on her face as she tapped the table. I guess she didn’t enjoy these kinds of jokes because she was obviously angry.

“So… you have a plan, right? Even though I’ve been causing trouble, the public opinion isn’t that great because this is the first time that someone died inside the Holy Empire’s castle and in an argument at that. I’m sure your head won’t get cut off by the guillotine, but the Red Mercenary Guild, the Blue Guild, and Lindel will lose their grounds. It may not seem much, but this is a sensitive issue…” she said.

“There are a lot of things that I’ve been thinking about. There may be changes to the plan, but the result won’t change,” I answered.

“It’s better to act with a plan. The reason why I watch your back is because you’re helpful to me and always keep in mind that me finding you attractive is the secondary reason,” she told me.

“I know. Thanks noona,” I said.

“…I’ll be back later tonight. Don’t stress out and try to think about different things while resting, darling.”

"You too, noona."

'She looks happy.'

I wasn't sure which part made her feel better, but I did see a faint smile on her face and just like Jung Ha-Yan, I could see Cha Hee-Ra's expression all over her face. The problem was that her emotions changed often just like her title on her status window.

Naturally, I felt tired from greeting the three women who came here all in one day, and honestly, talking to Jung Ha-Yan and the shaman was more difficult than getting interrogated.

"*Heuuuuk*… oppa… *waaaaaah*…"

Jung Ha-Yan cried as soon as she came here and she acted as if the world was coming to an end. I guess she was really heartbroken when she saw me being locked up because she was looking forward to spending time with me here and to make things worse, she caressed my cheeks as she wailed. It was as if she thought I was going to be severely punished. If someone had been watching us, they might've thought that I had gotten the death sentence or something. But once she understood the situation, she started to direct her anger at Ito Sota and I guess she must have thought that Kasugano Yuno was the source of the issue because she was also angry at her. Naturally, I gave her a special lesson in order to prevent a second accident, but despite that, her anger didn't subside. As such, I had to ask Cha Hee-Ra to watch over her.

'I guess she's not coming today.'

I shook my head when I felt like I was unknowingly waiting for Jung Ha-Yan to come and visit me. It was the same for Kasugano Yuno as well. It was difficult for Yuno to come and visit me because she had to keep working for me, but despite that, she would visit me a few times a day to give reports. I felt bad for the two because the person I was waiting for wasn't Jung Ha-Yan or Kasugano Yuno.

The person I was waiting desperately for was my lawyer who would defend me. It wouldn't really matter if I defended myself, but if I could find someone that could do it for me, then it would be better to hire one of the key members of a large guild. A smart and competent woman.

While I was having different thoughts, the door opened and I thought that maybe it was Jung Ha-Yan or Yuno, but the woman that was standing in front of me was the woman that I had been waiting for.

'Lee Ji-Hye.'

She mumbled as she watched me lying in my bed. "Well look at you… you definitely look like a loser now."

"I'm ashamed," I said.

"You've fallen right into it," she said.

"…"

"I guess it must've really hurt your pride. I've never seen you this angry before," she remarked.

"Is that so?" I asked.

I wasn't sure if she had already caught on or if she just knew me really well, but I couldn't help but feel that I got caught red-handed. I thought that I had to maintain my composure as much as possible, but naturally, I was angry about many things. Backstabbing others was my only specialty, and now that I had been backstabbed pretty badly, it was natural for me to have these thoughts. I was basically backstabbed in a ridiculous way by an overwhelmingly powerful monster.

Even though I was smiling, anger was filling me up. Jung Ha-Yan and Cha Hee-Ra hadn't noticed it, but Lee Ji-Hye pointed it out as soon as she saw me, so I felt flustered but I wasn't particularly unhappy.

'Soulmate.'

That was what I thought every time I saw her—Lee Ji-Hye and I were really like two peas in a pod.

"I thought that you would already be making your move, but I guess that wasn't the case," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"I was waiting for you," I said.

“I guess the titles Mercenary Queen’s Lover and the shaman’s guest isn’t enough?” she asked.

She was right. It meant a lot to me that the executive member of the Black Swan Guild and a high-ranking member that the guild master trusted was going to be my agent. This was what it was like to have connections with powerful people. After considering the fact that there was a custom in Korea where lawyers who were once judges or prosecutors would be favored during their first trials, it made even more sense.

‘One’s image is important… ’

“I won’t deny it, but more than that, I needed you, noona,” I said.

“*Hm…* it doesn’t sound all that bad, oppa,” she said.

“I’m glad that’s what you think and honestly, you’re right. I would be lying if I said I wasn’t mad and it did hurt my pride. The back of my head also feels sore,” I said.

“Should I cry with you?” she offered.

“No, I actually have a big case planned out and I was hoping you’d help me. I won’t just get back at him for backstabbing me and of course, you’ll be rewarded for it too,” I said.

“I was thinking about helping you even if I didn’t get anything in return since I’m a romanticist. I’m also mad at the guy personally and for ruining my plan, so then… we should search for the right authority, right?” she asked.

“I look forward to working with you, Miss Lee.”

“Don’t worry, Mr. Lee.”

Lee Ji-Hye quietly stood up and spoke to the guards in front of the door. I knew what she was going to do because this was the kind of role that I was expecting her to do.

“Excuse me.”

“Yes?”

“Where’s the weapon that Mr. Lee Ki-Young was holding?” she asked.

“*Oh,* that weapon… we’re currently keeping it for investigation purposes…”

“Please bring it right away,” she said, interrupting the guard.

“Excuse me?” the guard asked.

“I asked you to bring his weapon right now,” she said again.

“Y-You see… that weapon was used at the scene of the crime, so we’ve been taking care of it. Even if you ask me to bring it…”

“Is the investigation still ongoing? We have already explained the weapon’s skill and you guys have confirmed it yourselves. You guys even did several tests on it, so was that not enough?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“We’re holding it onto it just in case because it was determined to be dangerous…”

“I’m telling you to bring it just in case and I’m sure you already know that my client was threatened by the Yamato Guild’s member and even Kasugano Yuno testified about it since she was the witness. We’re not even sure whether he’s the victim or the assailant, so locking him up and taking his weapon is too much,” she explained.

“A person died. Based on the procedure…”

“The Cursed Sword Juliena is the minimum amount of protection he needs in order to protect himself. If an accident happens to my client because he has no way of protecting himself, will you be able to take responsibility for it? The Mercenary Queen will not just stand still and watch,” she said.

“But…”

“You guys… I’m asking out of curiosity.”

“…”

“Do you know how much that weapon costs? It’s a legendary-ranked item and there aren’t that many of them within the continent. How do you guys plan on taking responsibility if an issue occurs with the sword’s skill? From what I know, weapons

that have an ego will have side effects the longer they're away from their master and if Juliena starts having issues, I'll sue you guys in my client's place," she told them.

"We're just doing our jobs based on the Holy Empire's procedure. Even if you say that you'll sue…"

"I'm not saying that I'm going to sue the Holy Empire. I'm saying that I'm going to sue you for failing to manage Juliena. Of course, the Holy Empire isn't at fault, but for you guys, it's a different story. I'm going to sue you guys for oppressing my client, not the empire," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"*Oh…*"

"The price of my client's weapon is so high that you can't just put a price on it and if you don't manage that kind of weapon the right way, do you really think that you won't be blamed for it? Once I sue you guys, not only will all the guards be instantly in debt, but you'll also have to go through a long trial against a large guild. I'm sure I don't need to say who the Holy Empire will side with, right? Are you confident in going through with that?" she asked.

"…"

"I'm not sure whether you're acting this way because the Holy Empire told you that they'll protect you when something happens, but if that isn't the case, then shut up and bring my boyfriend's belongings. Deliver my words to your superior and if they don't have the authority, then ask the person above them and bring it to me no matter what. If you can't resolve it, then you guys come up with a plan and bring Juliena here no matter what… if you don't, I'll write down the names of everyone involved and sue all of you," she threatened.

"Y-You see… our authority is…"

"Didn't you hear me? Bring your superior or the person who has the authority! Who's the person in charge here?! How dare you do things this way!" Lee Ji-Hye yelled.

I felt like I was accompanying a scary unnie who was trying to get a refund for an expensive item.

'Ji-Hye unnie, you're so cool!'

She was definitely a femme fatale from my point of view and there was no other way for me to describe how she looked in my eyes right now.

CHAPTER 125
SOULMATE (2)

There was no other way to describe this situation.

After shouting with all her might, Lee Ji-Hye looked relieved and I noticed the guards quickly running to find their supervisor. As expected, Lee Ji-Hye spoke with a small smile.

“Now, let’s share each other’s thoughts. I’m sure you’ve caught on by now… did I make the answer easy for you?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Yeah,” I answered.

“I’ll count to two and then we answer at the same time,” she suggested.

“…”

“One, two…”

“Safety first.”

“Safety first.”

“You’ve caught on. You already know the public opinion isn’t good, right?” she asked.

“Of course.”

“Getting Juliena back is the first thing. You’re the victim, right? But I think it’ll be difficult to get her back… so getting help from an influential person in the Holy Empire might be a good backup plan…” she muttered.

“Victor Hart,” I said.

“Do you know him?” she asked.

“Hee-Ra noona knows him and I’m not sure about the details, but he's pretty strong in the Holy Empire. By just having him on our side, we can get whatever we want; no, we can get more than that,” I answered.

Obviously, what Lee Ji-Hye and I wanted wasn’t just safety. What we really wanted was…

‘Overturning the public opinion… ’

That was our first goal. The smallest thing could change anything.

The unexpected murder caused the public to focus on the castle and the news about me getting imprisoned wasn’t good news.

‘However… ’

Everything would change if people thought that I was being protected. We had to tell the public that the empire’s greatest soldier, Victor Hart, was protecting me, not that I was being imprisoned by the guards. The only difference in the news was the guards and Victor Hart, but this was enough to overturn public opinion.

“You’re the one that’s in danger, Oppa,” she said.

“I’m in a very dangerous situation so it can’t be helped. I’m sure getting protected by the Mercenary Queen and the shaman is effective, but getting help from someone that works for the Holy Empire will be more effective. Since we don’t know when Yamato’s assassin will strike again, it’s better to try it discreetly,” I suggested.

“You’re thinking about getting help from Lindel too, right?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“That’s right,” I answered.

“Using the media to stir up anti-Japanese sentiment won’t be difficult, but this situation does worry me,” she replied.

“Yamato Guild, the ones behind the Lindel terrorist attack, persecuted and threatened the innocent Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild. An unavoidable situation occurred and the framed victim is now in danger of being tried as a murderer. How does that sound? How about making it more eye-catching by saying, ‘An innocent Korean man is on the verge of getting executed by the guillotine.’ What do you

think?" I asked her.

"Not bad, but you know this will have a bigger impact than you think, right?" she asked.

"Of course. That's what I am aiming for. Punishing me will basically be punishing Lindel," I said.

"Since the Holy Empire doesn't like conflict, they'll feel even more uncomfortable about dealing with you, Oppa. You're good at saving yourself and that's kind of what I like about you…" Lee Ji-Hye praised.

"You have a strange taste in men," I told her.

"I told you before that I like ambitious men and if possible, I like dirty and powerful men like you, Oppa," she boldly declared.

"The feeling is mutual, then…"

"Since it'll be difficult for them to deal with you, it'll be better for them to go to war than to have you killed," she said.

"It's not that easy to start a war," I told her.

"I think so too… but thinking about it now, it's none of my business. Honestly, I don't think you would have much trouble if you planned this all on your own, but seeing how you called me to be your agent, you probably have something else in mind, right?" she asked.

"Of course. Sorry, but I'm going to need your help," I said.

"I was going to help anyway, Oppa. It's more effective if the agent of a large guild takes action rather than the victim, so just rest assured," she said.

"Will you be okay without my help?" I asked.

"Of course. I'll be more comfortable if I do it alone anyway," she answered.

Obviously, I already knew that Lee Ji-Hye was competent, but I couldn't help but feel a bit anxious since I wouldn't be directly involved. When it came to Hee-Ra noona's

long-time friend, Victor Hart, I thought that it would be best if I helped a little bit…

In less than two days, I realized how great Lee Ji-Hye's complaining skills were.

"If my client becomes sick, are you guys going to take responsibility? Wait, I think he's already sick…" she mumbled.

'That's right.'

"Oh, you're Mr. Kendrick? Are you in charge of this place?" she asked.

'Go! Ji-Hye, go!'

"How will you compensate for the mental damage you've caused my client for the partial imprisonment, Mr. Kendrick?" she asked.

'You're the best, Lee Ji-Hye.'

"Are you guys even doing a proper investigation on the Yamato Guild?" she asked.

'Ji-Hye noona! You're doing great!'

The way Lee Ji-Hye went around and talked to the informants of the Holy Empire made me mistake her for Lu Bu from the Three Kingdoms. I did expect it, but I never imagined that she would start complaining from the bottom of the rank, and to be honest, I felt bad for Kendrick and the guards. They had taken good care of me and even though they hadn't done anything wrong, I knew exactly what Lee Ji-Hye was doing right now.

'We're the victims… '

That was what she was strongly appealing to them about.

When the false rumor that Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild tried to assassinate Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild started to spread, the media's influence became really effective; no, describing it as effective wasn't enough. I was sure that Ito Sota wouldn't be happy about the fact that the agent from the Black Swan Guild was defending me, the Mercenary Queen was protecting me, and the shaman kept saying that she would find proof that would put me at an advantage. The keywords for this situation were safety, threats, and lives.

'Lee Ji-Hye is pretty competent.'

I was surprised by how much she was able to provide, and thanks to her, I was able to focus on my own plan. If it wasn't for her, it would have been a lot more difficult to go against the Yamato Guild.

"My client is very stressed out right now," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"We took that into consideration and made it comfortable…"

"Is this the best you can do? If you check the note of the Black Swan Guild priest, you'll see how mentally insecure my client is feeling. When thinking about the trauma he'll get from all the pressure and persecution he got from you guys…" she said.

"But…"

"Why is it taking you so long to get Juliena back? I'm worried that something happened," Lee Ji-Hye demanded.

"We're currently looking for a way. The higher-ups are currently having a meeting about it… We'd appreciate it if you could be a bit more understanding," the guard replied.

"How long are you going to say the same thing? If you keep doing this, the situation will only become more complicated. Is there something wrong with Juliena?" she asked.

"The weapon itself doesn't have any issues," Kendrick answered.

"That's an issue we need to check ourselves, Mr. Kendrick. As I explained before, Juliena is my client's private property and it's the only way for my client to protect himself. He has already been threatened once so there's no guarantee that he won't be threatened again. It's a fact that the Yamato Guild tried to threaten my client's life, so I'd suggest you figure this out in any way you can," she told them.

"We've been on guard for 24 hours just in case something happens," the guard said.

"Under the condition that Ito Sota comes to kill my client, I don't think you have the power to stop him. And excuse me for saying this, but when considering the

possibility that a few people in the Holy Empire might be colluding with him, he needs a more secure protection. Victor Hart hasn't responded to our protection request, and if you guys don't return Juliena, what are we supposed to do?" she asked.

"That's…"

"If those scoundrels come, are you telling us to just give up our lives? It has already been 18 hours since we submitted an official protection request and my client is currently in a very anxious state," Lee Ji-Hye firmly said.

"Well, you see…"

"If the request we submitted to Victor Hart is impossible, then shouldn't you at least be sincere about it? Even the Mercenary Queen is very worried. She's in a position where she has to keep leaving the castle, but the victim is getting threatened and the protection for him is inadequate. If I had the choice, I would take my client back to Lindel right now," she explained.

"We're doing our best and requesting help. I-I'm sure you're aware, but Mr. Victor Hart is very busy at the moment…"

"I'm worried that you only made a verbal request," she said.

Little strokes fell great oaks. Lee Ji-Hye was doing her best, but I was sure that Cha Hee-Ra was also discreetly requesting help from her old friend. I was feeling anxious because it was taking longer than expected, but it looked like it would soon come to an end. It didn't take long to complete the first piece of the puzzle.

"P-Permission was granted, Mr. Kendrick!" one of the guards said.

The guard looked extremely happy and a faint smile appeared on Kendrick's sweaty face. It was natural for him to react that way since he had to constantly deal with Lee Ji-Hye and the group of agents nowadays.

"Mr. Victor Hart has said that he would protect Mr. Lee Ki-Young himself and he should also receive Juliena today," the guard said.

"Good job," Kendrick told them.

“It’s nothing, Mr. Kendrick,” the guard replied.

“That’s a relief, Miss Lee Ji-Hye. It seems like Mr. Victor Hart has approved your request so he’ll officially be protecting Mr. Lee Ki-Young from now on. As you heard, we’ve completed the investigation regarding the Cursed Sword, so that will be returned as well, but I trust you’ll understand that he won’t be allowed to take it with him in certain areas. If Mr. Lee Ki-Young isn’t with Mr. Victor Hart, then Juliena…”

“Completely separating the Yamato guild members from us is the priority, Mr. Kendrick. I’m certain that they’re threatening my client, so they’re the ones that need to be suppressed, not Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Lee Ji-Hye explained.

“Okay, we’ll do our best,” Kendrick told her.

We managed to achieve something greater than just getting Juliena back.

After hearing the door close, a small smile appeared on Lee Ji-Hye’s face and she entered the room.

“Good job,” I told her.

“I didn’t think that we’d get Juliena back. This result isn’t that bad and Mr. Victor Hart will also be protecting you from now on,” she said.

“Just hearing that makes me feel better,” I said.

After arriving here, one of the things we were worried about had finally been taken care of.

“I’m worried about being restricted in where I can go, but it’s not a bad trade. My Ji-Hye noona will be doing the work and having Victor Hart by my side will actually help me with my plan,” I evaluated.

“You’re not still going to tell me about your plan?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“It’s better if I’m the only one that knows because it’ll be more effective. Once things progress, you’ll eventually find out,” I answered.

“How disappointing… but as you’ve heard, the restricted areas will be lifted a little

and if you're with Mr. Victor Hart, you might have to go to a church or attend worship," she said.

"Has the gramps never made contact with Yamato?" I asked.

"I did find out something. Want me to tell you?" she asked.

"Of course…"

"You know that the Holy Empire is split into the emperor's faction and the pope's faction, right? That grandpa is extremely loyal to the emperor, and since the Yamato Guild is on the pope's faction, they're more like enemies than friends," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"That's an interesting story. How's Lindel?" I asked.

"It's not bad. Causing anti-Japanese sentiment is a piece of cake, and if you do get treated unfairly, war will probably break out. So you don't have to worry, Oppa. I'm sure he decided to stay by your side because he knew what happened in Lindel," she answered.

"Continue to keep an eye on Lindel's public opinion," I told her.

"I've been doing it without you asking me, so you don't have to be in a hurry. Anyhow, shouldn't you be heading out? It seems like the others have been working hard… I've been interfering with the work that the pope's faction has been doing, but since they got a head start, it has been quite difficult," she said.

"I'll try contacting the emperor's faction. No word from the agents yet, right?" I asked.

"We still haven't won over the people of the imperial city, so I'll leave this task to you. If you're with Victor Hart, though, I'm sure people will automatically follow you. It shouldn't be difficult and I would recommend using this opportunity to get close to Victor Hart," she said.

"He seemed pretty close with Hee-Ra noona so it shouldn't be that hard," I told her.

"*Hm…* then will you attend the party tomorrow?" she asked.

“Most likely,” I answered.

“A murderer attending a party with an escort…”

“People will misunderstand if they hear you. I have always been the victim, and you… you should be proud of yourself since this was the result of your work, noona,” I told her.

A faint smile appeared on Lee Ji-Hye’s face.

CHAPTER 126
SOULMATE (3)

Obviously, the solution Lee Ji-Hye and I came up with started to overturn the media's opinion little by little. Bringing in Victor Hart by using assassins as an excuse calmed down the public opinion within the castle and it also kept Ito Sota in check. Explaining Juliena's functions and skills, as well as the shaman Kasugano Yuno's testimony, created a lot of conversation regarding this situation. The question about whether I intentionally threw my sword still remained, but if Ito Sota didn't submit a request to the pope, then it would be a charge that would soon be dismissed. The reason why I was still a suspect was because this was the first murder case that happened within the castle of the Holy Empire and the pope was working hard to save the face of Japan's large guild.

'Of course… '

All of this was only possible because of Lindel's current situation. Originally, Lindel and Celia didn't have a bad relationship, but after the news that the Yamato Guild could potentially be behind the terrorist attack and that innocent people could lose their necks at any moment started to spread, people weren't too happy about it. Of course, saying that they were going to lose their necks was a lie.

Even though I was comfortably sitting and drinking in my chair, it was important for the citizens of Lindel to believe that lie and naturally, that wouldn't be the end. My real goal was to develop hostility among the Lindel citizens by spreading the news about Yamato Guild's invasion of Lindel in advance. I felt like Lee Ji-Hye had used the media more aggressively and unconventionally than me to the point that I was really worried that a war was really going to break out between Lindel and Celia. There was also another big problem. It was the fact that the Red Mercenary Guild and Black Swan Guild were intentionally allowing the extremists and their actions.

A quick look at the news would give the answer.

[Ilsung Guild, Conducting Explosive Magic Training at Ramadel Mountain Near

Celia.]

[Today at 9 AM, Lindel's Ilsung Guild started explosive magic training at Ramadel Mountain. Cutting through Celia, the guild damaged the Ramadel Mountain by using ultra long-range magic, which was never used by them before… omit… Lee Seol-Joo (21), the most dignified person in Ilsung Guild commented that the arrogance and impudence of the Japanese had reached its peak and it is testing their patience. Not only did they say that they would turn the Free City of Celia into a sea of fire, but in three days, they're going to surround Celia's waters and begin their ultra long-range explosive magic training… omit… is their plan.

- Lindel Daily Report War Correspondent Kim Sung-Kyeong]

Among the extremists, the Ilsung Guild was a guild that I had heard of before and their actions were shocking. I unknowingly stared at Lee Ji-Hye and had no choice but to ask for the truth of the matter.

"These bastards… this is okay, right?"

"Yes, they're just asking for money so you don't have to worry and the money has been deposited yesterday. We've already discussed this, but… seeing them do that does make me feel a bit anxious. I didn't think they'd go this far either," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"It's not good if they're provoking too much…" I told her.

"Those guild members are definitely strange, but the Black Swan Guild has been controlling them, so you don't have to worry," she told me.

"Do you know them personally?" I asked.

"*Hm,* not really, but I did go out to drink with them before. I thought that it was going to be difficult to get along with them since they're kind of strange, but who knew that they would be so useful at times like this? They're crazy bastards that only care about war, so I didn't want to get close to them, but the more connections you have the better it would be for you after all," she answered.

"There are strange people in this world," I commented.

“Going out strong like they did is more effective and the rumors about Lindel going to war are spreading so fast that I’m sure there will be some kind of reaction sooner or later,” she said.

Basically, Lindel was on the brink of exploding. The merchants from Celia had been avoiding Lindel in order to prevent trouble and the innocent large guild of Taiwan was carrying out an evacuation plan for their people, but…

“A war won’t break out. The Holy Empire is blocking the conflict, so how can a war break out? The Republic and the Union of Kingdoms have a bad relationship, so it wouldn’t make sense for the two cities to go to war. Just let them use this opportunity to do their explosive magic training as much as they want because the more they do that, the safer you’ll be, oppa,” she explained.

“Considering the situation, I think you should spread information about Juliena as well, especially to Celia. Tell people that there’s a wide-area curse that can’t be stabilized with holy magic. By using Juliena as a medium, say that people have been researching ways to curse an entire city and that there are actual results,” I told her.

“Not bad,” she said.

“Send the outside war correspondents to Celia so that we can get this published… *Oh,* and also send a letter announcing that the Ilsung Guild are working on some kind of weapon that attacks the mind. It seems like that guild is into this kind of stuff and it’ll be more effective if crazy people like them take action rather than ordinary people just announcing it,” I told her.

“Okay, okay, I got it. You’ve been dealing with the Japanese media, right?” she asked.

“I’m trying to make them feel anxious for now by making our shaman work hard. You don’t have to worry about the Japanese, actually, don’t even worry about them at all,” I said.

“You’re so skilled. How did you get in touch with Kasugano Yuno?” she asked.

“You want to know?” I asked.

“No, it’s fine. It doesn’t matter who they are or where they live as long as they’re useful,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“That’s what I like about you, noona,” I said.

“Are you confessing to me at a time like this?” she asked.

“Who knows?”

I saw Lee Ji-Hye’s face getting closer to mine and I also slightly stood up, but that was when I heard knocking from outside.

“Oppa!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

“I guess time’s up.”

“You’re right. We need to start preparing,” I said.

“We’ll help you with the preparations and I already told the Mercenary Queen, so just wait a bit,” she told me.

It was time to attend the social gathering that would take place tonight.

Since I had to let Jung Ha-Yan in, I headed toward the door and as the door opened, I saw Jung Ha-Yan and she seemed different from her usual self. Maybe it was because I had been seeing a lot of mages wearing hoods, but Jung Ha-Yan looked beautiful. She was wearing a white dress, necklace and earrings. Overall, she looked very neat. She had a really nice body to begin with and the way the dress brought out her curves made it seem like the dress was made for her. The makeup that was on her cute and simple face made her look sexy. She didn’t overdo it and I strongly felt that she was trying to show a different side of her to me.

“You look pretty, Ha-Yan,” I said.

“R-Really?” she asked.

“Of course…”

“*Hehehe…*”

I noticed Jung Ha-Yan glancing at Lee Ji-Hye even while smiling. She seemed thankful rather than hostile toward her because Lee Ji-Hye was the one that got me out of the semi-imprisonment and made it possible for me to be here.

"*Oh my,* you look so beautiful, Miss Ha-Yan," Lee Ji-Hye exclaimed.

"R-Really? Thank you, Miss Ji-Hye," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"You seem more mature today. Seeing how you finished early, I guess you really wanted to show yourself to him, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yes," Jung Ha-Yan answered.

"You two are a cute couple. Oh, Ki-Young oppa was actually getting ready… could you please wait outside? Or you can sit here…"

"I'll sit here!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled, interrupting Lee Ji-Hye.

"Sure, if that's what you want."

The moment Jung Ha-Yan sat, I started dressing up. I wanted to go with the clothes I was wearing now, but it was important to wear an outfit that would fit the occasion, but what Lee Ji-Hye prepared for me was a bit too much.

"Come in everyone."

"Okay."

The Black Swan Guild was known to have a lot of female members and I didn't expect so many makeup artists to come here.

"You don't have a handsome face, but you don't look so bad. Do your best, everyone. I don't want my oppa to be looked down upon when he goes there," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Okay, Miss Lee Ji-Hye."

I couldn't deny the fact that I wasn't handsome.

Naturally, I sighed when I saw everyone gathering around me, but I decided not to worry too much about it because Lee Ji-Hye was going to take care of everything anyway.

"Leave some of his bangs and for the makeup team, please make him look like a kind person. I think it would be good to make him look a bit melancholic and give him a

bit of a sickly look. Costume team, pick out something with the strongest color and it'll be good to make him wear something that'll stand out," she added.

"Okay…"

"Sure…"

"Not red. You heard me, right? He needs to look like the victim so that the noblewomen will pity him… make him look as young as possible… he's going to wear an imperial outfit, not a suit. It's better to make him look friendly," she said.

"Okay, got it."

I knew that my appearance was important because the outer image that I would portray was part of politics.

The way the Black Swan Guild's employees were working while sweating in order to fulfill Lee Ji-Hye's request was a sight to see. There were makeup artists, costume coordinators and even beauty creators that were well-known on Earth. Even though I was looking at myself in the mirror, I couldn't tell what changed, but I guess that wasn't the case for Jung Ha-Yan because she was staring at me in a daze.

'She has always been like that.'

"Ha-Yan."

"…"

"Ha-Yan?"

"…"

"Ha-Yan?!"

"Y-Yes!"

Seeing how she didn't really hear me, I guess it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that my transformation was going well.

"You finished all the tasks I've given you, right?" I asked Jung Ha-Yan.

“Excuse me?”

“The item I asked you to send to the Blue Guild and the letter that needed to be sent,” I answered.

“Yes, I did it all. I sealed it tight with magic, just like you asked, oppa,” she answered.

“Good job. I knew I could count on you,” I told her.

“*Hehehe.* But oppa, does that mean you don’t have to keep staying here?” she asked.

“Yeah. I’m sure my actions will be limited, but they’re being lenient by letting me attend this social gathering. It’s all thanks to Ji-Hye,” I answered.

“*Oh…”*

“I’m sure my charges will be cleared as well once time passes,” I added.

“Th-That’s a relief,” she said.

After talking with Jung Ha-Yan a bit, time continued to pass by and during that time Lee Ji-Hye and the Black Swan Guild members were working hard to complete my look and as they continued their work, I noticed myself changing.

‘Huh… ’

I felt like I became handsome and even though there was nothing I could do with the face I was born with, this wasn’t that bad…

‘I could probably compete with Hyun-Sung now… ’

I finally understood why clothes, hair and makeup were important.

When I stood up after they were done, I looked at myself in the full-length mirror. Even though I was wearing something that was somewhat of a suit, the imperial outfit had a lot of annoying decorations, making it difficult to move in.

“Turn around, oppa. Let’s see how you look,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Okay, Miss Ji-Hye,” I said.

“The decorations are crooked.” She pointed out.

Even though she had pointed out a mistake, the Black Swan Guild members looked happy.

‘How sly… ’

Lee Ji-Hye quietly approached me and the way she checked my outfit reminded me of my mother tying a necktie for my father who was getting ready for work. I wasn’t sure if she was trying to show it off to Jung Ha-Yan or if she wanted to do it herself, but Jung Ha-Yan looked frustrated for some reason.

‘What if they just came out and fought?’

It would make things more comfortable for me.

Lee Ji-Hye was a pro when it came to provoking Jung Ha-Yan and invading her territory.

“Our oppa looks so handsome. Don’t you think so, Miss Ha-Yan?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“*Huh? Oh,* yes…”

I guess she couldn’t stop provoking Jung Ha-Yan despite the important event we were about to attend.

“I-I can do the rest…”

“You’ve been sitting down, so just keep sitting. It’s better to leave this to the professionals,” Lee Ji-Hye said, cutting her off.

She quietly wrapped her arms around my neck and was fixing the back of my outfit, but it felt like she was purposely doing this to show off to Jung Ha-Yan.

‘Stop, Ji-Hye noona… ’

“Okay, all done,” she said.

“Thank you, Miss Ji-Hye.”

“It was nothing. I’m glad I could help. Miss Ha-Yan is still young and doesn't know much, so I should work hard in helping you, right? Oppa? You must be having a hard time because of your young girlfriend. *Haha,*” Lee Ji-Hye said.

She was blatantly provoking Jung Ha-Yan and the moment I saw the look on her face, I realized that we were soulmates.

‘This is what support is, kid.’

That was the expression Lee Ji-Hye had and the way she looked at Jung Ha-Yan really resembled my usual expression.

“Shall we get going? I need to get ready as well. Miss Ha-Yan, please take care of oppa for me today,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Okay…” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

CHAPTER 127
I WON'T YIELD

"I'll see you at the meeting, Ki-Young oppa and Miss Ha-Yan," Lee Ji-Hye said.

When Lee Ji-Hye left, I suddenly became resentful towards her for leaving when the atmosphere had turned bad. I was just about done getting ready, when the mood turned - Jung Ha-Yan didn't seem happy. Thankfully, it didn't seem like she was being hostile or was thinking about killing Lee Ji-Hye, but the deep sense of defeat remained on her face.

"The decoration is c-crooked, o-oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan said.

'It's not crooked… '

"*Oh,* I think it's fine," I said.

"No, it's crooked. I-I'll fix it for you."

"*Oh…* thanks, Ha-Yan."

Of course, she must have felt the difference between her and Lee Ji-Hye. Unlike her who ran over here to show how pretty she looked, Lee Ji-Hye left after taking care of me perfectly, so I was sure that she must have felt something through that. I wasn't a child and I didn't think that it was a woman's job to support a man that way because if Kim Hyun-Sung had to immediately stand on a stage, then I would have stood in Lee Ji-Hye's place and supported him. I wouldn't be able to do the makeup for him, but I could support him in choosing an outfit and creating an image for him. Lee Ji-Hye was the representative among the group of agents, so what she did for me was completely normal, but the problem was that Jung Ha-Yan had been in a position where she could only accept that.

Lee Ji-Hye showed her, *'this is how you support a man,'* and her saying Jung Ha-Yan was too young to know how to do this must have really bothered Jung Ha-Yan.

'Because it's true… '

I was certain that Jung Ha-Yan had already forgotten about the fact that she had saved my life because she started to look anxious.

“Th-There’s dust here,” she said.

“*Oh,* thanks Ha-Yan,” I said.

“There’s something in your hair, o-oppa…”

I guess Lee Hi-Hye’s actions hit her harder than I thought because she was suddenly trying to take care of me. I felt really flustered because she was on the verge of crying and it was probably because she felt bad. She was blaming herself for letting Lee Ji-Hye take care of me instead of doing it herself and I while actually *did* prefer Lee Ji-Hye to take care of me rather than her who had always been by my side, I of course couldn’t tell her that.

“I-I have been busy since this morning. I was also getting ready… I was going to help you if I had time and I forgot… because of the task o-oppa gave me…” she said.

‘It’s fine. No need to make up excuses, Ha-Yan… ’

“No, it’s fine. I can see how hard you worked on preparing yourself. It makes me happy seeing you dressed up like this,” I told her.

If Jung Ha-Yan discovered the tasks that Lee Ji-Hye had been carrying out at the same time as hers, I was sure that she would feel ashamed. Unlike her who only had to do simple tasks, Lee Ji-Hye was not only manipulating Lindel’s public opinion and the media’s, but she also had to manage her connections within the castle and defend me. However, what I wanted from Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t Lee Ji-Hye’s role because everyone had their own roles to fulfill.

“You’re doing fine, Ha-Yan. Don’t think about it too much,” I told her.

You had been enduring it well and you had also been growing, so I just need you to keep on doing that.

This wasn’t the stage for a mage that knew how to think out of the box.

“O-Oppa…”

'This stage belongs to my soulmate and me.'

When I quietly walked outside, I saw Victor Hart and a few of his knights. They were the guards that were going to protect me from the assassins today.

"Hello, Mr. Victor Hart," I said.

"Looks like I was a bit late, young man," Victor said.

"Thank you for taking care of me," I said.

"I didn't think that the situation was *that* dangerous that you had to call an old man who was resting… I guess you're more scared than I thought," he said.

"There's no harm in being cautious," I told him.

"I heard that Hee-Ra has been waiting at the entrance. Shall we get going?" he asked.

"Yes, of course."

"*Tsk*, I'm asking out of curiosity…"

"Yes?" I asked.

"About killing one of the members of Celia…"

"Of course, it wasn't murder, Mr. Victor Hart. I'm nothing but a victim that has received threats and Juliena simply did what she thought was right in order to protect me." I explained.

"I see…"

"I'm sure you know as well, Mr. Victor Hart. Ito Sota is colluding with the pope's faction and since they're oppressing my side, I was cornered into being a suspect. I'm sure everything was calculated and this must be the Yamato Guild's way of getting back at the Blue Guild after we announced that they were the ones behind the terrorist attack in Lindel. They're trying to either assassinate me or turn me into a murderer in order to hide the truth." I explained.

"Is that so?" he asked.

“Yes, and isn’t it a bit strange that he wasn’t able to block Juliena? What do you think, Mr. Victor Hart?” I asked.

“I don’t know what you’re asking,” he said.

“Let’s assume that my sword is trying to kill someone around us. Will you be able to block the sword, Mr. Victor Hart?” I asked.

“…”

“Ito Sota also has the ability to block Juliena and I’m sure that the majority of the free citizens that had been invited here could easily block her. It’s not true that I killed that man intentionally,” I told him.

“But you became the suspect,” he pointed out.

“The world doesn’t revolve around the truth and this isn’t a simple murder case. It’s become more of a political case. A political fight within the Holy Empire between the emperor’s faction and the pope’s faction. It’s a battle for rights that had long spread to Lindel and Celia.” I explained.

“So that’s why there’s a strange rumor going around Lindel,” Victor spoke up.

“…”

I knew he was a soldier, but I guess he was smart as well. I couldn’t help but hold in my breath when I saw how bad of a mood he was in.

“When I was young, I met a lot of people like you. People that have forked tongues,” he said.

“…”

‘This is why I don’t like gramps who are quick-witted… ’

I was surprised because he caught on quickly like an old man who had been through a lot. He must have become wiser as he grew older.

Before I could gather my thoughts, however, I heard the old man’s voice.

“Usually, those types of people sacrifice a lot of people in order to protect their own safety and they always had bad endings. Not only do they end up destroying themselves, but others as well,” Victor said.

“What do you…”

“*Tsk*, stop playing dumb. I’ve heard the rumors as well. Right now, Lindel is continuously provoking Celia, and isn’t that your doing?” he asked.

I was bothered by how the old man was quietly looking at me and of course I knew that if I kept playing dumb, it wouldn’t do me any good so I had no choice but to answer.

“Half of what you said is true.”

“…”

“I understand that you think that I’m not a good person, but I simply had no choice and if I were to exaggerate a little, if I didn’t do anything to Lindel, then I would be standing in court instead of attending this event. I might’ve suffered a bit of damage while not knowing that I fell for Ito Sota and his group’s trap.” I explained.

“You wouldn’t have lost your life, though,” Victor said.

“I’m sure that I wouldn’t lose my life because I’m the Mercenary Queen’s lover as well as the guest of the shaman of the Yozora Guild, but what can I do? If I had been an ordinary person with no connections, would you be able to guarantee that I wouldn’t lose my life?” I asked.

“That’s…”

“I’m sure it’ll be difficult. Yielding is a word that fits people like you. Let’s assume that I compromise by losing to them in order to minimize the conflict. You see, humans are very simple, so if they keep receiving favors, they believe that it’s their right to receive those favors, so if you yield once, you’ll have to do it again the next time and the next time and the next time,” I told him.

“…”

“Out of all the free city citizens, do you know why I was able to come here and speak

to you like this when it hasn't even been a year since I arrived here and this was my first time in the capital? How could an incompetent and unskilled idiot come to a place like this? Of course, it's not because the Mercenary Queen cherishes me and it's also not because I'm the shaman's guest."

"…"

"I was able to come here because I didn't yield anything," I told him.

"*Tsk*…"

"I was able to receive protection from the Holy Empire's best soldier and live in wealth and honor behind the Mercenary Queen all because I didn't yield. I'm attending this party instead of going to court because I didn't yield and it's also the reason why I'm alive. Special people and people who are in a position where they can yield won't be able to understand people like me." I explained.

"Your way of thinking is unique," Victor said.

"It's a thought that anyone can have and you can figure out the answer if you think about why the Holy Empire's emperor is worried about the pope's reaction. I'm sure they've been yielding for centuries and because they've yielded so much, we're now in this current situation. People and groups that avoid conflict can't speak up and I understand how you feel. I also definitely know how much you love the Holy Empire, but that's only possible because you're in a high position. There are a lot of people like me and I'm talking about the greedy ones that devour what others have given away or dropped on the floor. To put it bluntly, you basically raised me." I explained.

"It's sophistry. What you're saying is pure sophistry," Victor said.

"I hear that quite often, but you know, I'm sure there are some parts that you agree on. If I swung my sword and didn't yield and you wanted what was mine… what would happen?" I asked.

"We would be arguing and fighting. There would be a lot of blood on my hands and I would have lived a life full of regret and shame because of that," he answered.

"But the emperor you love and your subordinates would have lived a happy life. Of course, it's important to get along with everyone and I'm not telling you to kill the pope this instant because they're already part of this Holy Empire, but in order to

protect your power, you must not yield," I told him.

"…"

"I'm not trying to start a war. I'm just not yielding," I said.

"If…"

"Yes?"

"What will happen if those people do not yield either?" he asked.

"I'm not sure. I also want to avoid war, but one thing I'm sure of is that I will be able to avoid them because it's them that should be avoiding me. I threw the card and now it's up to them whether they'll accept or avoid it," I answered.

"If they don't avoid it…"

"I already told you that I had made my decision," I said, interrupting him.

"You're a lot scarier than I thought… and you're also talented… I think I know why Hee-Ra likes you so much," Victor said.

"I'll take that as a compliment, sir," I replied.

"*Tsk*. Do you even like Hee-Ra?" he asked.

'He's a slow-witted old man… '

As we continued walking, Jung Ha-Yan looked at me when the old man asked that question because she was waiting for my answer. I didn't really have an answer for it, but there was a word I loved using in these kinds of situations.

"Somewhat…"

"I'm relieved to hear that," Victor said.

"You seem to really cherish her," I said.

"Of course. It may sound funny, but Hee-Ra is like a daughter to me," he answered.

I didn't bother answering because I saw Cha Hee-Ra waiting for us when we arrived at the party entrance. Her red dress, red hair, and red lips were unfamiliar to me but she caught my attention.

"What were you two boys talking about?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"It was nothing," Victor answered.

"It's nice seeing the two people that I like walking in together like that. Your second girlfriend is *hm…* a bit pretty. I'm sure no one will look down on you. How do I look, darling? It has been a while since I've worn this. Do I look okay?" she asked me.

It wasn't just okay. Her dress was so revealing that it couldn't hide the scars that were all over her body, but those scars showed just how much she struggled until now.

I guess I became too sentimental while talking with the old man because even though she and I weren't the same type of people, I knew that we lived similar lives.

Struggle…

Cha Hee-Ra moved forward and did whatever she could in order to get to the position she was in today. She was fire—a burning and unquenchable fire. Her face was filled with confidence that wasn't bothered about showing the scars on her body. She had *that* confidence that wouldn't let her be shy about it, and she actually wasn't shy.

"You're beautiful…"

I spoke unknowingly and my compliment caused Cha Hee-Ra to blush and Jung Ha-Yan tightened her grip around my hand. In addition…

"The guild master of the Red Mercenary Guild, Miss Cha Hee-Ra. The captain of the Imperial Knights, Mr. Victor Hart. Mr. Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild and Miss Jung Ha-Yan of the same guild has arrived."

I heard someone calling us.

CHAPTER 128
TRAP CARD ACTIVATED (1)

I wasn't really excited. We already knew what we had to do and didn't really think much about entering high society.

'I just need to do my job.'

A new person would always receive attention no matter where they went and since I was the Mercenary Queen's lover, I was the star of the party - which placed me in an advantageous situation. Being here in the first place was a way of announcing that I had somewhat proven my innocence and there wasn't a person alive who was brave enough to talk shit to me while I was being protected by Victor Hart.

As soon as the door opened, I saw a luxurious interior. There were tables on one side of the room, servants were walking around carrying light desserts and wine and I even saw Asians with black hair, but what caught my attention the most were the noblewomen with colorful hair. Just by looking at them, they were obviously wearing luxurious clothing and the accessories they were wearing must be too expensive to put a price on.

'Imperial aristocrats.'

I also noticed people wearing the Holy Empire's priest uniforms, so they were probably in the pope's faction. What I found to be a bit absurd was that their clothes and the decorations looked very expensive. I guess the religion in this world wasn't based on integrity.

Before I started walking, I noticed Cha Hee-Ra quietly reaching her hand out toward me and I saw a hint of guilt on her face.

"Grab my hand, darling."

Even in the Holy Empire, a man would usually escort a woman, but Cha Hee-Ra had grabbed my hand and led the way as if she didn't care about those formalities. My arm did hurt due to the mana that was flowing into me, but I bit my lips and

followed.

'Damn it hurts. Shit… '

Cha Hee-Ra was taking big steps and the way she looked down at people as if she didn't care about them was the image I had of the Mercenary Queen. I wasn't sure what they thought when they saw a weak man being escorted by a strong woman, but…

'It's effective.'

This was helping me with my image.

"Who…"

"I guess it's true that the Mercenary Queen has fallen deeply in love. This is a first, isn't it?"

"He looks different from what I imagined. I thought he was going to look more manly…"

"I heard that he's a skilled alchemist. I guess he's like a scholar."

"I can't imagine him hurting someone, though. He does look kind of cute…"

"I feel the same way. It's like, I want to protect him."

"You're right, I had the same thought."

They were talking amongst themselves while hiding their mouths with a fan, but I was able to hear everything.

'What the heck are those old ladies talking about?'

I wasn't certain, but I felt like I was popular amongst the noblewomen. I couldn't really understand their desire to protect me, but I guess that was the image I was portraying right now and of course, there were men that were looking at me with scornful eyes. It broke my heart, but it wouldn't be so bad to be remembered as the idiot that followed the Mercenary Queen because my worth would be revealed one day, and right now, it was better to be remembered as the victim.

'A guy like him?'

'It must be a joke!'

'There's no way he can be the murderer.'

'There must be something going on.'

These were the type of thoughts that I wanted them to have and I wasn't sure if Cha Hee-Ra was intentionally doing this, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that thanks to her actions, we were halfway there. Despite the fact that we had already entered the social gathering, people were still looking at us, and not only that, but I also saw people approaching us to talk to us. Deciding on who to talk to first was kind of important here and if possible, talking to someone with power was the best decision.

When we arrived at a decent location, I saw Jung Ha-Yan biting her lips.

"Your second girlfriend doesn't look happy," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"…"

"You can enter with him tomorrow," she told Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Oh,* okay," she said.

"I like being fair," Cha Hee-Ra said.

I was really thankful for the fact that Cha Hee-Ra was quietly taking care of Jung Ha-Yan even in a situation like this and while I was looking around, I heard a voice.

"I feel like the stars of tonight's meeting have all gathered here."

"It has been a while, Lady Caitlyn."

"Mr. Victor Hart, it has been a while. Have you been doing well, Mercenary Queen?" the lady asked.

"Yes, I've been doing well."

'Not bad… '

A woman with blue hair started talking to us and just by looking at her, it became obvious that she was an important person.

'Lady Caitlyn.'

She was the center of the social gathering. Not only was it because she was a duchess, but her friendly personality also helped her make many connections. Her husband was sick in bed, so she took his place and worked in his stead, which caused her to have a lot of influence within the Holy Empire. Basically, it meant that she was the perfect person to socialize with.

"Is this the man from the rumor I've heard so much about?" Lady Caitlyn asked.

"My name is Lee Ki-Young."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Caitlyn. You look a bit different from what I imagined," she said.

"What do you…"

"I imagined you to look a bit scarier and I didn't expect you to be so tall," she explained.

"Thank you and you're just as beautiful as the rumors I've heard, Lady Caitlyn," I said.

"*Oh my.* Have you heard about me?" she asked.

"Of course. I've heard many stories from Hee-Ra noona," I answered.

Giving these types of compliments was a given and as expected, I saw a faint smile appear on her face.

"If you don't mind, can I borrow your boyfriend for a moment, Mercenary Queen?" Lady Caitlyn asked.

"Of course, Lady Caitlyn. I was worried that he was going to get bored, so I'm relieved that you're here to take him away," she answered.

"*Hehe,* thank you."

Jung Ha-Yan looked disappointed, but Cha Hee-Ra said that it was okay because there was something else she had to do. I was sure that she was going to discuss Lindel's current situation with the guild master of the Black Swan Guild and Jung Ha-Yan also had to meet with the court mages, so it was only right for me to be with Lady Caitlyn. When I put out my left arm, she looked at me as if it was unexpected. A moment ago, I grabbed Hee-Ra noona's right arm for protection, but to the lady, I guess she thought that I was escorting her.

Excluding Lady Caitlyn, the other noblewomen started approaching me slowly and it was understandable since I was the center of the rumors. A lot of people were looking and asking questions, so I thought about what I should talk about first and came to the conclusion that it would be helpful if I talked about something that wasn't related to the recent event.

'It's important to build a foundation.'

It wouldn't be good to suddenly talk about the incident.

"*Oh my…* so the Mercenary Queen is…"

"Yes, I've known Hee-Ra noona since we were on Earth and she helped me a lot back then too," I said.

"*Oooh,* I see."

"Where did you get Juliena from?"

"I went to capture a dungeon in order to rescue a party. It originally belonged to our guild master, Kim Hyun-Sung, but I was chosen by Juliena," I answered.

"That's amazing. I'm very interested in the free city, so I heard about what the Blue Guild experienced. Isn't Juliena a treasure you discovered while capturing the Cursed Shrine?"

"You know it very well," I said.

"I do. I've heard that the potion you've made could cut down the curse's effect by half and you managed to succeed in capturing the dungeon. Is it true? That was the first

time that an alchemist managed to be useful during a dungeon control so I heard that it was the hottest topic in Lindel."

"It was nothing," I said.

"*Oh my,* so it is true?"

"Interesting…"

There were some that already knew about me and obviously, they must have conducted a background check before coming here. I was certain that Lee Ji-Hye was spreading rumors about me and those rumors must be good things about me. While we were talking and getting to know each other…

"Ito Sota of Free City Celia's Yamato Guild has arrived."

The bastard that framed me slowly walked in and naturally, people started to look at him. I saw his sharp face and I was sure that he had been taking care of his looks. I noticed that the pope's faction, the noblewomen, and the other nobles were looking at him favorably.

'He's skilled… '

Having this many people look at him favorably could be considered a skill and people were already greeting him left and right. It almost seemed like he was trying to show off his connections, competency, and power. His every movement was overflowing with grace and his kind expression would make anyone think that he wouldn't do anything dirty behind people's backs. I wasn't sure when he arrived in this world, but considering the possibility that he had been managing the people here, I was sure that their level of trust in him was way beyond my imagination. He was different from Cha Hee-Ra who only maintained her relationship with Victor Hart.

Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild had just recently become the guild master and Kasugano Yuno wasn't the type to socialize with people so…

'It means he's popular… '

It was a childish and simple expression, but I was sure that Ito Sota was popular here. What surprised me the most was that he was slowly walking toward me and naturally, my expression changed instantly. When I looked and acted slightly scared, I

noticed Sota smiling brightly.

“It has been a while,” he said.

I didn’t understand his intention to talk to me. Was he simply showing off? Or was he trying to reconcile? The trick he had pulled on me dealt a heavier blow on me than he thought, but if he was scared, he wouldn’t have approached me first.

“Yes… it has been a while,” I said.

The noblewomen started moving aside and Victor Hart started becoming wary of Sota. Since he was my escort, it was normal for him to react this way and it was amusing to see the faint expression on Ito Sota’s face.

‘Ha… ’

Sota looked like he was having fun.

‘So that’s what you think… ’

This bastard didn’t know much about me and he probably thought that this situation was going to end easily, but the result was different. I was at a social gathering, not a court and Lindel was on the verge of exploding so the Holy Empire wouldn’t be able to touch me. Ito Sota was probably having fun and thought of it as interesting because this was his first time experiencing a situation like this. For a guy that had everything, he probably considered people like me as *interesting*.

“I think there has been a misunderstanding, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Sota said.

‘Bastard… ’

He wasn’t trying to reconcile and he wasn’t avoiding the card and the dice that I threw out of fear. He was definitely looking down on me and it was the same behavior that the winner would do to the loser. He applauded my unexpected move and said that he would make room for me in his guild.

‘You’ve been working hard. I’m impressed. So what now? You don’t have any other choice so just grab my hand. That’s the best option for you.’

It felt like that was what he was saying to me.

I would be lying if I said that he failed in hurting my pride and that was when I heard a voice from behind me…

“Misunderstanding, my ass!”

“Miss Cha Hee-Ra, the Free City of Celia had always wanted to maintain a good relationship with Lindel. No matter the reason, the two groups are very heated right now,” he said.

“You think so?” she asked.

“The Holy Empire doesn’t want conflict and despite the reason for the incident, it’ll be better if we just let go of the bitter feelings we have for each other. It’s heartbreaking that I lost a guild member, but… since we’re both within the Holy Empire’s sphere of influence, we’re basically on the same side so it’ll be better to reconcile than to fight against each other.” He suggested.

Basically, he was saying that he was making a sacrifice and it sounded as if he was going to compromise for the sake of peace.

“That’s something my darling should be saying, not me, Ito Sota,” she said.

“Of course, I’m saying this to Mr. Lee Ki-Young as well. I think it’ll be best if we don’t cause any more trouble and if you felt threatened by our actions, I sincerely apologize,” he said.

The way he bowed 90 degrees and extended his hand out was a sight. Considering the fact that the powerful men of the Holy Empire were watching, I had no choice but to grab his hand in this situation. When I quietly extended my hand out, he grabbed it tightly and smiled.

If there was one thing that he wasn’t expecting…

“Thank you for the rational decis… huh?”

“*Ahhhhh!*”

It was the fact that one of my arms wasn’t normal the moment I entered here.

‘You’ve activated the trap card, you bastard!’

“Ahhhhh!”

CHAPTER 129
TRAP CARD ACTIVATED (2)

Obviously, I wasn't going to let it end just like that. Simply breaking my arm or dislocating my shoulder wasn't a bad idea, but the gift I prepared for him was a bit worse than that. When I mixed my mana with the mana Cha Hee-Ra had put into me earlier, the result was better than I expected. I did get a warning that it was going to be painful, but it was more painful than I thought.

"*Ahhhhhhh!*" I yelled.

Blood started spilling out from my right arm in an instant and I saw Cha Hee-Ra cutting off my arm. Of course, this wasn't an attack against me. What she did was more like first aid. I expected this to happen because before coming here, she planted her mana into me and that mana filled my body as if it had exploded inside of me. If she didn't cut off my arm, then her mana would have dug into my brain in an instant. I did feel an immense amount of pain, but when I saw Ito Sota looking at me as if it was absurd, my pain went away.

'You're like a painkiller… '

"You bastard!"

'Nice acting!'

Cha Hee-Ra looked as if she was panicking and her acting made the situation even more believable. Hee-Ra noona was against it at first, saying that it was dangerous, so it was natural for her to react this way.

'Hahahaha… '

I wanted to laugh out loud, but my voice was filled with pain.

"*Aaaaaaaaack!*"

My arm had been severed so, of course, I was in pain. Actually, it was more like all the

pain I had suppressed until now was released all at once. I had to endure the pain from the time Cha Hee-Ra had escorted me in. I could barely hold it in earlier, and since I no longer had a reason to hold it in, I screamed even louder. I felt like I became a newborn baby.

The blood splattered on the noblewomen and they stepped away from me as they screamed. Jung Ha-Yan was surprised so she quickly ran over to me. I heard someone calling for a priest and Cha Hee-Ra clenched her fist started throwing punches at Sota - the punches were strong enough to make things fly all over the place.

"*Kyahhhh!*"

"*Ahh!*"

"Oh my gosh!"

If I really wanted to be the victim, there was nothing more effective than me being in the action and although it was painful, it was a reasonable decision.

Despite the fact that Cha Hee-Ra was punching him, Ito Sota was still staring at me with a frustrated look and even though it was only for a moment, I smiled brightly while rolling on the ground.

'You dumb bastard!'

Craaaack!

I heard a loud sound as Cha Hee-Ra's fist struck Sota's face and after spinning a few times, he struck the wall.

Booooom!

"You bastard…"

"*Cough*…"

When the smoke dissipated, I saw Ito Sota embedded in the wall, spitting out blood, and Cha Hee-Ra approaching him. I was certain that the pain he was feeling was beyond his imagination because his endurance wasn't that high.

The majority of the people looked shocked because it happened so suddenly, but they focused on me again. It was only natural for them to focus on me since I was grabbing their attention by screaming. In an instant, the priests started gathering around me and many people started running over in order to check my condition.

"O-Oppa, are you okay? Oppa… *heuuuuuk*… oppa…" Jung Ha-Yan said while crying.

"*Ugh…*"

"Oppa…"

"*Aaaack!*"

Jung Ha-Yan didn't know about this situation so she was crying while holding my arm. I thought that the situation didn't look that bad, but before I knew it, Lee Ji-Hye ripped her dress and stopped the bleeding on my arm.

'What a memorable scene. Yeah… it's definitely a memorable one.'

It was a memorable scene you would see in war movies.

"What happened?"

Even though Lee Ji-Hye knew what was going on, she asked the priests an obvious question. She was expressing her anger and her acting was outstanding.

"No, treat him first. We'll have to attach his arm back. What are you doing? This is no time to be spacing out. Hurry up and call for the priest!" she yelled.

"Hurry… a priest… a priest!"

"Your arm wouldn't have been the only thing you lost if you were a little late," she said.

"Please tell me your symptoms."

"M-Mana was intentionally injected into him from the outside and it started running rampant. Thankfully, Miss Cha Hee-Ra had cut off his arm in time so she was able to stop it from eating away at his body, but I'm sure that he's in a lot of pain. Stitching his arm back is a priority and we must get rid of the remaining mana that's in his

arm before it's too late. S-Someone…"

"M-Me, I'll do it," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"I'll leave it to you, Miss Ha-Yan," Lee Ji-Hye said.

Thankfully, the opinion of the priest that rushed over here had placed us in an advantageous situation. I thought that it would have been better if they said it louder so that others could hear it, but I was sure that the people close to us heard it.

The mana that suddenly ran rampant in my right arm was the reason for this incident and the culprit who intentionally planted the mana inside me and caused me pain became *painfully* obvious. There was one name everyone thought of. Our idol…

'Ito Sota.'

That bastard was the culprit and he had no way of getting out of this. People that were considered strong usually had advanced mana control knowledge as one of their job effects and intentionally planting mana into my arm and making it run rampant was a type of magic that only people with that knowledge could do. There were probably about 5 people in this room that could do such a thing, but the three people everyone thought of were probably Cha Hee-Ra, Victor Hart, and Ito Sota. Victor Hart didn't have enough stamina to plant mana into me so he was excluded and in their eyes, there was no way my lovely Hee-Ra noona would do something like that, so it was obvious who the culprit was. I was certain that Ito Sota must have realized by now that he had fallen for my trap.

When I slightly lifted my head, I saw Jung Ha-Yan holding my severed arm. She was getting rid of the remaining mana that was in it and behind her, I saw Ito Sota constantly spitting out blood.

"*Cough… ughhhh…*"

The attack was sudden, but he should be more than capable of dodging her attack.

It was a bit unfortunate. I felt happy seeing him coughing out blood, but if he attacked Cha Hee-Ra back then, it would have become the most beautiful scene. Nevertheless, this situation felt exhilarating. The Yamato Guild members that were around him tried to fight Cha Hee-Ra, but they were useless and if I had a choice, I

wanted to have the last hit, but…

'I can't do that considering my situation.'

When I saw how Victor Hart and the guards blocked Cha Hee-Ra's path, I thought that it was over and the gramps looked troubled as he quietly stared at Cha Hee-Ra.

"Stop it. I won't allow any more of this," Victor said.

"Move gramps. My business is with that bastard behind you, not you," she said.

"This isn't the practice room, Hee-Ra," he said.

"Gramps, you know as much as I do who caused all of this! But why is it that you're stopping me instead of that bastard? Even the guards around me… Could it be that you still can't tell who's the victim and who's the assailant? Do you need more proof? That bastard is the offender and he has been caught in the act. This guy tried to kill my darling in front of me so he deserves to die," Cha Hee-Ra said.

'Good job.'

Everything was made up and honestly, none of this made sense. No matter how crazy Ito Sota was, he shouldn't be crazy enough to plant mana into me and make my head explode when all the important people were gathered here. If people thought about it carefully, they would easily deduce that Ito Sota wasn't the culprit, but that applied to my case as well. Obviously, I wasn't crazy enough to kill one of his guild members within the castle of the Holy Empire.

'I don't have that kind of guts either… '

I basically paid him back for the ridiculous trick he had pulled on me and if I had proof, I could have easily come up with a reason. Just like what that idiot had done, I could fabricate the truth.

"You know that something is strange. Even if he threatened Lee Ki-Young, he's not dumb enough to do something like this. There's… there's definitely something wrong, so it's best to follow the procedure and hear both sides of the story," Victor said.

"That's what you think. My darling has a lot of important data in his head," Cha Hee-

Ra said.

"…"

"He can't really say anything because there's no physical evidence, but the information he has is quite powerful… I completely understand why that bastard Ito Sota did what he did. I'm sure he wanted to keep my darling quiet because if he used that information, then it would be the end for Sota." She explained.

'That's right… '

Cha Hee-Ra's acting was better than I thought. I was worried that her acting was going to be awkward, but I guess she must have gotten excited because she was doing so well.

'I'm proud of you, Cha Hee-Ra!'

"What…"

"He wanted to kill my darling so much that he did this at a social gathering like this. I can guarantee that there's a motive behind this," she said.

'Of course, it's a lie.'

"It's also the reason why he threatened my darling and used Juliena to turn him into a murderer…"

'That's also a lie… '

"If I told you that it was related to the Lindel terrorist attack, will you believe me?" she asked.

'That's a lie as well… '

"Even if that's the case, did you forget the fact that you're not the one that should punish him? I understand that the person you love is injured, but please think about where you are right now. If you don't… I'll have no choice but to wield my sword," Victor said.

Victor Hart looked anxious. I was certain that he had fallen for Cha Hee-Ra's acting

and was thinking about the possibility that her words were true but after recalling the conversation he and I had before coming here, I was sure that he was denying that possibility.

'She's like a daughter to me… '

Considering what he said, it seemed that he really trusted Cha Hee-Ra, but there was also a reason why parents said that there was no use in raising children.

Victor was quietly holding up his sword while maintaining a troubled face, so I had no choice but to say something because nothing would come out of it if this stalemate continued.

"Hee-Ra noona, I'm… fine…"

"Darling."

Seeing Cha Hee-Ra's beautiful figure as she ran toward me made my heart race and at this moment, Cha Hee-Ra became more precious to me than Kim Hyun-Sung. I felt bad for our regressor, but that was how I felt.

"Are you okay, darling? How's your arm?" she asked.

"I'm fine… don't make a fuss, noona…" I said.

"Okay, I understand," she said.

I guess she must have calmed down because her voice started to sound awkward. But when I saw the guards and Victor Hart surrounding Ito Sota, I felt better.

"You'll have to come with us for now. You must tell us the reason why you did that at a place like this," Victor said.

"I didn't attack Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Sota said.

"We'll follow the procedure and investigate," Victor said.

'The word "Procedure" is a good word… '

"Okay, I'll go along for now, but I never attacked Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I want to tell all of

you here that I didn't approach Mr. Lee Ki-Young with the intent to kill and I never threatened him," Sota said.

"You'll have a chance to make a statement about it later. Let's go," Victor said.

"Okay."

I saw him glancing at me and even though I saw his annoyed face only for a moment, I guess he was really mad. Prideful people like him who didn't lack anything would definitely feel ashamed of falling for a trap made by an insignificant being like me. I was sure that he was really furious right now because when he framed me, I was so mad that I couldn't even sleep. I didn't know what was going to happen to him, but I was certain that he wanted to rip me into pieces right now and if he could do that, he would have it long ago and no one would be able to find my body. It was clear Ito Sota must be thinking that not being able to do that was a shame. If he wanted to kill me, then he picked the wrong place because he shouldn't have brought politics into it.

'It's not over yet, you poor bastard. This is only the beginning so I hope you look forward to it.'

I wanted to send a message to him since he was still staring at me, so when I slowly lifted my middle finger, I felt an exhilarating thrill down my back as the corner of my lips went up.

'Fuck you.'

CHAPTER 130
TRAP CARD ACTIVATED (3)

'Fuck you.'

I laughed and even though I should stop, I couldn't hold it back. I thought I needed to hold back my laughter because I was surrounded by people who were comforting me, but I couldn't stop.

"I-I think he's having a seizure. I need the priests to continue casting the spells and for the mages, please check to see if there's still any explosive mana in his body," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Okay…"

Lee Ji-Hye realized what kind of situation I was in right now, so thanks to her lying to everyone that I was having a seizure, I quietly grabbed my arm and rolled again. Kasugano Yuno arrived and she stood near me anxiously.

There was no reason for me to be here because my body was already recovering and I would rather rest comfortably in my room rather than be a spectacle, but despite that, there was a reason why I was putting on a show.

'We're the victims, you bastards!'

This was what I wanted to tell them and the person that was making the biggest fuss was none other than Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Heuuuuuuuung* oppaaaaa! *Heuuuuuk*…"

"I'm okay…" I told her.

"*Heuuuuung*…"

Her tears and runny nose made her look sad and to Jung Ha-Yan, this entire situation was real. It was natural for her to react this way because the oppa she loved so much

screamed painfully the moment he grabbed the dirty hand of a villain and almost died. With the way she was crying, the onlookers might think that I had already died. Since Jung Ha-Yan was crying so sadly, the kind-hearted and empathetic noblewomen quietly wiped their tears and even though I told Kasugano Yuno about all this earlier, I guess she wasn't used to this kind of situation because she also looked at me while crying quietly.

All I had to do was show that I was in pain without exaggerating it since that wasn't a good idea. Lee Ji-Hye must've thought the same thing because it seemed like she wanted to settle the situation and that was when Cha Hee-Ra carried me on her back. She didn't seem to care that my clothes and body were covered in blood, which made the situation even better. Her body was immediately covered in blood when she carried me, but to the noblemen and women in the Holy Empire, she looked beautiful and I was sure that the current situation was more entertaining than any other literary work for them.

For a woman, Cha Hee-Ra's back was wide and being on it really made me feel like I was being protected. Despite the fact that I never once touched her body, I knew that she had a very strong body. It was like her muscles were perfectly compressed and not unnecessarily bulky like Park Deok-Gu. When I thought about how Ito Sota got punched by Cha Hee-Ra whose body was like this, it made me laugh once again.

'It's actually amazing that he didn't die.'

I was certain that he had done all he could to protect his body the moment he got punched, but despite that, he was still forced to cough up blood which meant that he had sustained a fatal injury. To be frank, the damage that Ito Sota sustained was double the damage that I experienced.

Cha Hee-Ra quickly exited the party hall, Jung Ha-Yan followed behind while wiping her tears and Lee Ji-Hye must have thought that she needed to calm everyone down because she was still talking to the others. Since she knew I was safe, she thought that it would be advantageous if she remained here and continued her task. I was a bit disappointed, but that was just like Lee Ji-Hye.

'It's also advantageous for me too… '

Anyway, my boat was sailing at full speed. Cha Hee-Ra was running toward the comfortable hospital room and as soon as we arrived, she placed me on the bed

while still looking a bit serious. When the priests came in and started their treatment once again, I couldn't stop laughing. As Jung Ha-Yan stepped back and watched the situation, Cha Hee-Ra quietly asked, "How's his condition?"

"He has improved a lot, Miss Cha Hee-Ra. If he continues to rest, he shouldn't experience any other side effects," a priest answered.

"Thanks. You can leave now," she said.

"Okay…"

"Second girlfriend, you leave too," she told Jung Ha-Yan.

"I don't wa—"

"Ha-Yan, if you go to my room, you'll find a letter in the second drawer. Deliver that letter to the shaman right now," I told her.

"O-Oppa… *heuuuuk*…"

"I'm fine, so please listen to me, okay?" I said.

"Ok… kay…" she mumbled.

"Go change your clothes and wash up. I'm okay now, so just deliver that letter and then we can stay together, okay? Also, tell Kasugano Yuno that I'm okay," I said.

"Okay…"

I wasn't sure why Cha Hee-Ra told Jung Ha-Yan to leave, but even I didn't want Jung Ha-Yan to be in the room right now and since there happened to be a task that I needed her to do, so it was the perfect excuse. She was still crying and I did feel bad about it, but I couldn't laugh in front of her when she was so worried about me.

The priests quickly left the room and Jung Ha-Yan slowly left the room afterward.

When they were gone, I released the laughter that I had been holding in.

"*Hahahahahaha!*"

"…"

"*Hahahaha! Cough!*"

"…"

I laughed so hard that I started coughing, but I saw Cha Hee-Ra watching me quietly.

"I feel that that indigestion I've been feeling for 10 years has finally disappeared. Noona, did you see Ito Sota's face? *Cough. Hehehe*."

"…"

"It was more perfect than I thought. Seriously… if that bastard dodged your punch, it would've been the best… it's too bad that didn't happen, though. If you killed him right there, things would've been more comfortable, no, now that I think about it, it's a relief that he's alive. I still have a lot of gifts prepared for him, so I can't have him dying so early. You were controlling yourself, right? Noona? Or maybe his reaction was just fast. *Pffft*. Well, it doesn't matter, *cough*," I said.

As I continued to laugh, Cha Hee-Ra's expression started to change a little bit. I wasn't sure why, but I couldn't help but notice that she was feeling uncomfortable.

'What's wrong with her?'

Of course, I was worried about her reaction because her face looked kind of angry. But she finally spoke after being quiet all this while. "Darling."

"Yes?"

"Is this funny to you?" she asked.

'What the hell is wrong with her?'

"Is this funny, you bastard? Forget about that piece of shit Ito Sota. You do realize that you almost died, right?" she asked.

"But I…"

"Don't you dare say that you didn't die! If I was even a little bit late, you could've

actually died or you could have been crippled for the rest of your life. If I didn't cut off your arm in time…" she said.

"That's why I said I trusted you, noona," I told her.

"That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about your attitude. I've seen a lot of crazy bastards in my life, but I've never seen a crazy bastard like you, you shithead. I've seen a few guys betting on their lives sometimes, but none of them laughed like you. Do you want to die that badly?" she asked.

"No…"

"If you want to die, just tell me so that I can kill you myself," she demanded.

"What's wrong with you, noona?" I asked.

She definitely wasn't like her usual self. I thought that Cha Hee-Ra was going to laugh with me after pulling off the hidden camera prank perfectly, so of course, I was flustered by her reaction. But after seeing her bite her lips hard, I finally realized why she reacted this way.

'Huh?'

I never imagined that the Mercenary Queen would show this kind of reaction.

'Does she… '

I thought that maybe Cha Hee-Ra had actually fallen in love with me, but I shook that thought out of my head because I just couldn't imagine her being obsessed with me. I was a bit confused, but it was a fact that she was worried about me. Actually, according to her, she was fond of me, but no matter the reason, she was actually *worried* about me right now.

"Were you worried?" I asked.

"Shut…"

When I lightly touched her face, I saw her quietly closing her mouth.

"You don't have to worry, noona," I said.

"You…"

"It's because you were there with me and that's why I'm able to laugh right now. I never doubted you once, so I wasn't putting my life on the line. I was certain that I wasn't going to die," I told her.

"You…"

"Thanks, Hee-Ra," I said.

When I slightly pulled her face using the arm that I could barely move, her body got closer to mine and when I quietly placed my lips on hers, I felt her body shaking.

'She's nervous.'

I couldn't believe it either, but Cha Hee-Ra was definitely nervous. It only lasted for a moment and after seeing her crave for me, I was certain that I was at least, half right. During all of this, I noticed her grabbing my injured arm tightly and after thinking that this could turn into something else, I let out a short scream.

"*Ouch!*"

"S-Sorry," she said.

"It's fine, Hee-Ra noona."

I had never seen her react this way before and I guess she must have realized that she wasn't acting like herself because looked embarrassed. I saw her purposely changing the subject.

"A-Anyway, consider yourself lucky."

"Yeah, this is more than enough. We've turned the tables around," I said.

"You have a plan, right? I did what you asked me to do, but people will be curious about the secret you said you knew and they'll also want to know why Ito Sota wanted to kill you. If you don't have solid evidence, they may just release him," she asked.

"I already know that because the Holy Empire doesn't want conflict," I said.

“Executing the master of a large guild is definitely a problem and when considering the fact that the pope’s faction is supporting the Yamato Guild, I’m sure Ito Sota will show up at the meeting a week later as if nothing happened,” she said.

“You don’t have to worry. You’re the only one I’m telling this to, but there’s something else I’ve been working on,” I told her.

“What?”

“You can consider the task I gave to Ha-Yan a moment ago a part of that plan,” I said.

Cha Hee-Ra seemed really curious. I thought that it would be best not to say anything, but she was going to find out eventually, and telling her ahead of time wouldn’t ruin my plan anyway. It could be surprising for her though.

“I sent potions to Japan,” I said.

“What?” she asked.

“The Blue Guild had been distributing potions to Japan through Kasugano Yuno, but externally, we’re going to make it so that the shaman and the Blue Guild won’t have any connections to this potion. The truth that the people will hear is that a new clan in Japan are the ones that have developed and distributed this potion,” I explained.

“You’re…”

“Of course, the rumors will say that the small clan is only a front and the person that’s actually behind all of this is Ito Sota. His movements are restricted right now because of that damn procedure, so this is the perfect time to get the media involved and of course, we won’t be the ones to actually spread the rumor since we have saved up a lot of insurance. The truth will be revealed little by little and in the end, it’ll choke that bastard,” I said.

“You do know that Ito Sota has a nice image amongst the nobles and the pope, right? Darling?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“That’s even better, noona. People aren’t really interested when a villain commits a crime, but when a person has a kind image, it’ll be easier for us to taint it. By the time Ito Sota enters the high society again, the public opinion about him will be so bad that he won’t be able to change it. I can destroy his image to the point that it’ll be

impossible for him to recover from it," I explained.

"…"

"Do you know what these types of people find the most enjoyable in the world?" I asked her.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Talking behind people's backs," I answered.

Cha Hee-Ra looked a bit flustered.

CHAPTER 131
WITCH HUNT (1)

Noblemen and women that didn't have anything else to do usually enjoyed gossiping about others and personally, I believe it was a topic that everyone would enjoy talking about. The news about Ito Sota wearing the mask of a kind-hearted person and killing an ordinary person in order to hide his weakness was enough to stir up the high society. If he already had a bad reputation, then it wouldn't have caused such a big impact, but because he had such a good image and was known as the idol of high society, a massive impact was inevitable.

After I finished talking to Cha Hee-Ra, I spent the entire day comforting Jung Ha-Yan and although I felt like it was a waste of time, I did hear good news so I was feeling better. The news about Lee Ji-Hye already working hard had placed me in a very good mood and although I started spreading rumors whenever I got the chance, Lee Ji-Hye was even more skilled than me in talking behind people's backs.

'I should help her out with that today.'

Anyway, the one that visited me today was Kasugano Yuno, a person I hadn't seen in a while. I saw her kneeling quietly and bowing.

"You seem to be in a good mood, Master."

"Of course. I don't feel any aftereffect and I don't have any trouble moving around," I answered.

"You… You must've been in a lot of pain," she said.

"It was painful, but it was nothing. I took painkillers beforehand, but I don't think it had been really effective because the mana had really turned my insides upside down… by the way, how's the distribution going?" I asked.

"I've completed everything you asked me to do. They are already on the market and the sales have been great," Yuno answered.

“How good are the sales?” I asked.

“Today, our net profit is over 20,000 gold, excluding the amount we sold on the black market,” she answered.

“Not bad. Considering that it hasn’t been that long since we started selling, that’s not bad at all,” I commented.

“Yes, and the number of people that are buying it for personal satisfaction is increasing and I’m sure that number will continue to increase,” Yuno said.

“That’s good,” I said.

I knew they would sell. Not only was it reasonably priced, but when considering the fact that it helped people forget about the pain of reality, it would be strange if it didn’t sell - especially in a world where there were no dreams or hope. This was an improvised version of the psychotherapy potion that I had developed at the Cursed Shrine, but the problem with this one was that it was slightly addictive. It wouldn’t be a big problem if I discussed it with a pharmacist, but I was the pharmacist, so of course, there wasn’t anyone that was able to handle the potion properly.

“We haven’t been caught, right?” I asked.

“Of course not, Master. I’ve been using my personal business to launder the potions that we have been selling on the black market and the new guild that has been selling the potion has always been moving according to the procedure and on top of that, some of the Yamato Guild members have started using the potion too…” she said.

“That’s interesting news. Any news from the Yamato Guild?” I asked.

“It’s difficult to tell, but after they started investigating Ito Sota, the guild’s mood changed a little bit. They refused to trade with our guild and have been in contact with another guild,” she answered.

“How are we dealing with it?” I asked.

“We’re also trying to get in contact with another guild, so you don’t have to worry, Master. Even in Japan, Ito Sota’s public opinion isn’t that great right now,” she said.

“That’s good…”

I hadn’t heard good news like this in a while. It made me happy to hear that the public’s opinion of Ito Sota wasn’t that great here or over there. It was an obvious reaction since the Yozora Guild had been criticizing him, but the public opinion of the Yozora Guild wasn’t that great at all because some of them were from the right wing. Of course, once everything was over, all of this would be taken care of.

“If something comes up, report it to me,” I told her.

“Yes, Master. I’ll continue keeping an eye out,” Yuno answered.

“By the way, have you seen anything recently?” I asked.

“Unfortunately no…” she said.

“It's a nice, yet uncomfortable skill,” I commented.

“I’m sorry. P-Please punish me,” she said.

I saw her getting down on the floor again, but now wasn’t the time to give her the punishment she wanted because I heard Cha Hee-Ra’s voice from outside.

“Darling? Didn’t you say you were going to meet with Lady Caitlyn?” she asked.

“I was about to head out, noona,” I told her.

Cha Hee-Ra sounded a bit uncomfortable. Even though the environment around me had changed a bit, what changed the most was my relationship with Cha Hee-Ra. Not only did she pretend to have forgotten about her strange actions from last time, but she had been talking to me frequently these days. Whenever Kasugano Yuno was around, she would intentionally look for me and I guess she must be doing this because she was worried that she and I were going to become a couple in the future.

‘She’s just not expressing it… ’

It was because she was the prideful Mercenary Queen. I wasn’t sure why her attitude had changed compared to before, but I was certain that it was something personal since liking someone wasn’t a feeling one could explain logically. The possibility that I was filling her mind up even now could just be my misunderstanding, but based on

the situation, I was certain that I had become more important to her than before.

'It's a good thing.'

"I should get going," I said.

"As you wish, master," Yuno said.

Not only was I taking care of the Mercenary Queen, but I took care of Yuno as well. When I slowly patted her head, she looked just as happy as Jung Ha-Yan did when I did this to her and it showed that Kasugano Yuno was easy to manage. Her difficulty level was easy and since she had already made me the owner of her body, there was nothing else I needed to say.

"You seem like you're having fun, Master," Yuno said.

"It's not because I was bored being with you. I just enjoy talking badly about Ito Sota with Lady Caitlyn, so you don't have to worry. *Oh,* make sure you keep maintaining your relationship with other people in the Holy Empire… anyway, I'll see you later," I told her.

When I quietly opened the door, I noticed Cha Hee-Ra looking at me and it was strange how she looked at the shaman briefly. Kasugano Yuno simply bowed without expressing any other emotion, but she must have felt Cha Hee-Ra staring at her because she stared back at her.

"Let's talk," she said.

"*Oh.*"

"You can go back to work, darling. I have something I need to talk about with her. You're fine with that, right? Shaman?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"Yes, of course. I also have something I need to discuss with you. I do have a lot of work I need to get done, but I can spare a few minutes to talk with you," she answered.

"That's great. I'll see you later, darling," she said.

"…"

I was a little bit scared about what they were going to talk about, but I thought that it would be best if I didn't get involved. I had plans and rather than trying to find out what those two were talking about, spending time doing what I loved was more important to me. The empire's guards escorted me to Victor Hart's place and after walking with them, I saw noblewomen having tea time in a garden.

"*Oh,* Mr. Lee Ki-Young." Lady Caitlyn called out.

"Nice to meet you, Lady Caitlyn and Lady Elise. *Oh!* You're here too, Lady Marilyn. It has been a while since I've seen everyone," I said.

"Everyone wanted to participate when I told them I was going to have tea time with you. How are you feeling?" Lady Caitlyn asked.

"I still feel a bit uncomfortable moving my arm… but I couldn't possibly miss my chance to speak with such beautiful ladies. I'm sure you were all surprised by what happened last time… so I'm very thankful that you've called me here today," I said.

"It was nothing. Everything happened so suddenly that we couldn't take care of you properly. We should be the ones apologizing," she said.

"Anyone would've been scared in that situation. I'm thankful that you called for me after that incident… I'm just glad that I was invited here to spend time with you," I said.

"This is nothing. We really enjoy talking to you, Mr. Ki-Young," Lady Caitlyn said.

Of course, it was fun. I never thought that I was gifted in talking, but these ladies who had nothing else to do would admire or clap and enjoy their times here. The topic of the conversation was important, but since I was the talk of the town right now, they felt superior for being able to talk with me.

'The rumors will spread quickly as well… '

It was akin to a web of collective communication and since they were in the center of it, the rumors would spread like wildfire. I also enjoyed drinking tea while gossiping about different things and as expected, the ladies started the conversation which made me smile. They were discussing different topics, but they were eventually going to talk about that bastard.

“By the way, I’ve never thought of him that way, but he seems like a scary person.”

“You’re right. Who knew he would do something like that at a social gathering? Whenever I think about that day, I would wake up in the middle of the night.”

“So, you think so too, Lady Elise? I’m the same way. I thought that he was trustworthy because he had a good relationship with the pope, but I guess you can’t really judge a book by its cover.”

“I actually heard something…”

“*Oh!* What did you hear, Lady Marilyn?”

“It’s kind of a sensitive topic… I heard it from my friends who are in the pope’s faction. I’m telling you this because I trust you all, but please keep it a secret.”

“Yes, of course.”

I guarantee that the news Lady Marilyn was going to tell everyone was going to spread all over the empire within three hours after this gathering ended. I was certain that it would be a *secret* everyone would know.

“That man, Ito Sota, and the abbess, Ariel from the pope’s faction are apparently…”

“What?!”

“*Shhh!* Keep your voice down, Lady Elise.”

“There are rumors that they have an inappropriate relationship and even though it hasn’t been confirmed yet, considering the fact that they have been going in and out of the Vatican late at night, it makes sense…”

“Honestly, the rumors about Lady Ariel aren't that great either. She’s always smiling yet she has been doing things like that behind everyone’s backs. I thought that it was strange how she kept visiting the castle during the social gathering, but I never imagined that she had a connection with Ito Sota…”

“The Vatican isn’t what it used to be and even though I don’t doubt their hearts in serving God, their actions do seem suspicious.”

“According to a friend I have in Celia, Ito Sota’s reputation in the free city isn’t that great.”

“Really?”

“He supposedly made fun of women, bullied the weak, and didn’t really act like a knight. Everyone is turning a blind eye because he’s the guild master of a large guild, but his influence has been weak recently so people have been criticizing him for his actions.”

“I see…”

“They say that he’s the owner of the black market and the owner of the slaves that are running the black market…”

“*Oh dear,* how scary…”

Even though I wasn’t saying anything, that bastard was completely turning into a piece of shit. The strange rumors about how he had a bad relationship with the Vatican and him throwing away his fortune in a way that even a third-rate wealthy family wouldn’t do started to spread. The majority of the rumors that were created here would eventually become the truth and be the hottest topic within the castle, so I had no choice but to enjoy it and participate in the conversation.

“I’ve actually heard of that rumor as well.”

‘No, I haven’t… ’

“About him managing the black market…”

‘This is the rumor I started spreading.’

“*Oh my,* really?”

“Yes, I heard you can obtain various items there. There were many people in the free city that had found it unusual how fast the Yamato Guild grew. Of course, we’re not ignoring the guild’s achievements, but when comparing their dungeon captures or other achievements, the guild became too big, too fast,” I explained.

“*Oh, dear…*”

“It’s difficult for me to explain the details, but I heard that they’ve been developing using bad methods, *oh,* but the source hasn’t been confirmed…” I quickly said.

The source would be confirmed after today.

“I see. So the information that you said you knew… is it related?”

“Yes, but now is not the time for me to say it since I’m in a position where I have to be cautious… I’m worried that it’ll cause unnecessary conflict,” I told them.

“After seeing him injure you like that, I’m sure there’s a reason why there are rumors like that about him. He’s probably getting some kind of benefit behind everyone’s back, right?”

“By the way… you’ve been drinking tea and talking with that man…”

“No one can be trusted in this world. Don’t you agree, Lady Marilyn?”

“You’re right, Lady Caitlyn. I must warn my father as well.”

“Me too.”

“I’ll do the same. I’ll tell my husband as well.”

This was the reason why I couldn’t stop myself from coming here and if Ito Sota was here, I was sure that he would have laughed because of how absurd everyone and everything was. After some time, these ladies started to criticize Ito Sota directly and even started cursing him.

“That piece of shit!”

“He’s the reason why the free city citizens are being criticized and of course, I don’t mean you, Mr. Ki-Young…”

“It’s fine and I completely understand how all of you are feeling,” I told them.

Not only could I understand their feelings, but I was also having so much fun.

‘I’m having way too much fun!’

Just imagining what kind of rumors were going to spread tomorrow got me feeling excited. The warm sun, the delicious tea, and the fun gossip…

'This is my raison d'etre.'

These were no different from drugs.

CHAPTER 132
WITCH HUNT (2)

This was no different from drugs and I wasn't the only one addicted to it.

As the days passed, Ito Sota's reputation had gotten worse to the point where it was now impossible for it to recover. His reputation crashed so hard that if we assumed that this continent was made from the same material as Earth, his reputation probably would have reached the Earth's inner core by now.

'Piece of trash… '

There was no other word to describe him. Less than four days later, he became a scumbag and was even called the hidden king of the underworld. He had also become known as someone who wouldn't hesitate to trade slaves and traffic organs. He was a cold-blooded man who ridiculed women and killed many people to maintain his power. The wonderful news about him trying to assassinate me to cover hide his weakness was fueling this groundless rumor.

'Of course… '

There were still a few people that didn't believe in this juicy gossip, but it didn't matter since people didn't care whether the news was real or fake when everyone in the castle was talking about it.

'It's interesting news amidst their boring lives.'

The majority of the people hoped that this interesting news wouldn't die down and that it wasn't a lie. They wanted the witch hunt, the main topic of their conversations nowadays, to continue.

"Now this is what you call a witch hunt. *Hahaha.*"

Choosing to be with the noblewomen rather than with the duke, count or those with power was the better choice because once I returned home, they would talk to everyone about the conversation we had today regarding Ito Sota. It was like having

workers I didn't need to pay. It was better for them to tell their families since they trusted them the most rather than me having to tell them since they could be suspicious of my intentions that way.

The sudden change in Ito Sota's public opinion must have caused his people to start moving because they were trying their best to respond to the public opinion, but it wasn't enough to stop the rumors from spreading. They tried to give an excuse, but the people were already looking at them coldly and if we were living in the modern world, I was certain that they would have already held a press conference to prove Ito Sota's innocence, but since he had to follow the procedure and go through with the investigation, his movements were limited which should be frustrating to him. Unlike them, I was in my element so I was walking around freely.

The people of the Vatican who were trying to get rid of Ito Sota because of the bad rumors surrounding him were my important customers.

"*Oh,* Father Glang. It's been a while," I greeted.

"*Haha,* it's only been a day," he said.

"Hahaha, I always want to meet you because talking to you about god is a very useful and fun time for me." I smiled.

"You're flattering this humble priest, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Oh, there's someone I want to introduce you to today. Have you heard of Sister Jessica?" he asked.

"Of course. It looks like I'll become closer to the Benigoa goddess today," I answered.

"You'll first have to get close to Sister Jessica because she has high expectations of you," he remarked.

"I'm getting quite nervous," I said.

"*Hahahaha.*"

I had a meeting with Father Glang today and tomorrow would be Sister Jessica's turn. Once I became close to her, I would look for the others right away.

"*Oh,* you're here, Mr. Ki-Young!"

“I rushed over here because I wanted to see you, Sister Jessica,” I told her.

“You promised you would call me Jessica when it’s just the both of us,” Jessica said.

“*Oh,* right! I did agree to do that.”

“We’ll be meeting Father Andurin today. When I told the archbishop about you, he said that he really wanted to meet you,” Jessica said.

“I’m feeling kind of nervous, but I’ll do my best for you, Jessica,” I told her.

“You’re embarrassing me, Mr. Ki-Young,” she said, shyly.

After getting close to Sister Jessica, I met the next highest person.

“It’s nice to meet you, Father Andurin,” I greeted.

“It’s an honor to meet the person that has been the talk of the town lately,” he said.

“I’m more honored to be able to meet you in person. Sister Jessica told me a lot about you, but you’re better than I expected,” I told him.

“*Hahaha,* you flatter me, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. By the way, it’s almost time to eat so why don’t you join us? Father Basel will be joining us as well. Why don’t you join us too, Sister Jessica?” Andurin suggested.

“Thank you for the offer, Father Andurin.” Jessica expressed her gratitude.

Every time I took a step forward, I would meet with someone higher up. After meeting with so many people, it had gotten to the point that I was having a hard time memorizing their names.

“I know this is sudden, but I’ve prepared a gift for you, Father Basel,” I said.

“You shouldn’t have, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. *Geez,* you didn’t have to get me anything…” he commented.

“It’s okay to accept it since it’s just a small gift to express my gratitude. It’s a good drink so it should help you when you’re feeling lonely. *Oh,* and this is my donation to the Vatican,” I offered.

“You didn’t have to…” Basel wanted to refuse.

“My offering to god may not be much, but I included a small amount of 50,000 gold. If I get the chance in the future, I’ll do my best to continuously make donations,” I told him.[1]

“Now I know how much you love god, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” he remarked.

“*Haha,* I honestly prepared more. I would like to donate to you, Brother Basel,” I told him.

“W-What are you…”

“I know you’ll use it for god,” I added.

“*Ahem*…”

The way Father Basel took my gifts without hesitation was a sight to see and it showed how the Vatican was rotten to its core. Usually, when a *religion* was permanently established, it would eventually become corrupt. Onlookers might frown at the corrupt religion, but it was a beautiful environment for people like me to run around in.

“How about meeting the Patriarch as well, Mr. Lee Ki-Young?”

“Yes, of course, I would like to meet with him,” I answered.

“Before that, there’s someone I want to introduce you to. Her name is Helena and she’s the Heresy Inquisitor,” Basel said.

“Helena?” Basel called out.

“Yes, Father Basel,” Helena answered.

“He’s an important guest, so you should introduce yourself,” he told her.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. My name is Helena and I’m the Heresy Inquisitor,” she said.

“Yes, I’ve heard about you. I heard you’ve been doing the honorable job killing the

dirty heretics… forgive me for saying this, but I never imagined such a beautiful woman would be doing *that* kind of work," I said, complimenting her.

"*Oh…*"

"You've been doing a great job in the task that everyone else would feel burdened by," I added.

Naturally, I either looked around or looked down at the ground as I said it.

Honestly, managing relationships was difficult because there were a lot of things I had to take into account.

I wouldn't have any excuse if someone told me that contacting the other person and giving them small gifts on important dates wasn't that difficult, but there was a reason why the majority of people weren't able to do this.

I was certain that there were people who thought that interacting with people they weren't close to was a chore because their own time and space were more important than those strangers. They prefer self-development rather than getting stressed about socializing with strangers. Of course, I respect their lifestyle, but the majority of them would obviously lack connections.

'The world is rotten… '

Talking to people and seeing their faces often would help me. Men were blind in their own cause and people would usually be more friendly toward people they knew than to people they met for the first time. Some wouldn't get jobs just because they were from the same area as those they were familiar with and others would feel awkward toward their coworkers because they hadn't been attending the company dinner meetings that often. It was a very personal opinion, but society was built so that people like me had the advantage. When applying that in the last meeting I had, I was getting a lot of help from them, and even though our meetings only lasted for a short period of time, my schedule was still full to the brim. Of course, I wasn't the only one busy.

Cha Hee-Ra was meeting with the high-ranking officials and even though she wasn't enjoying it, it was necessary for her to show her face since she was an individualist. Kasugano Yuno was the busiest out of all of us because she was managing the distribution and management of the potions. She also had to work on manipulating

the public opinion within the Free City of Celia, and it seemed like she was having a hard time adapting to her new lifestyle. Jung Ha-Yan looked like she wasn't busy, but she was getting stressed because she was spending less time with me than before and I guess the last incident must have shocked her because she was so focused on her magic training that she often stayed in her room nowadays. The person who was just as busy as I was none other than Lee Ji-Hye. She looked really exhausted as she was returning to rest after finishing today's task.

"What did you do last night?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I was with Sister Jessica and Sister Helena," I answered.

"You're pretty skilled," she complimented.

"I just participated in the prayer meeting," I said.

"All night?" she asked, doubtful.

"Yeah," I replied.

"No one is going to believe that. I don't care about that stuff, so do whatever you want." Lee Ji-Hye furrowed her brows.

"It's up to you whether you'll believe me or not." I shrugged.

"They're useful, right oppa?" she asked.

"They're not bad to use temporarily," I answered.

"That's fine, then. Have you made any progress?" Lee Ji-Hye asked, changing the topic.

"The plan I'm personally handling is moving along pretty well… I didn't bother talking about Ito Sota though. When I mentioned the word donation, their smiles were really bright. How are things going on your end, Ji-Hye?" I asked, concerned.

"I got some hot news today. You might be shocked when I tell you…" she said.

"What is it?" I asked, curious.

“The trial has been scheduled,” she answered.

“That… is surprising,” I said, nodding.

I thought they wouldn’t hold a trial so this news was a bit surprising to hear. Even though Lee Ji-Hye and I had always been working hard to spread rumors after considering Ito Sota’s position, we still thought he would stand trial much later.

‘I was also charged as well… ’

Like I mentioned last time, Ito Sota and my relationship were basically Celia and Lindel’s relationship right before blowing up. If Ito Sota received an unfair trial, then there would naturally be an uproar in Celia, so from the Holy Empire’s point of view, it was better to settle it in a civilized manner even if there were a lot of people watching. I thought that maybe they were going to hold a formal trial and just give him a fine, but…

‘They’re not that dumb.’

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that the moment he stood in court, he would basically be the suspect and if Ito Sota knew that Lee Ji-Hye and I had been reducing his influence little by little, there wouldn’t be a reason for him to pick a battle where he was at a disadvantage. Ito Sota’s political life was on the verge of coming to an end and it was difficult for the Vatican to continue supporting him.

“What about bribing the judges?” I asked.

“It’s half and half. Some met with me, but there seemed to be a few that are still on his side, but you know what’s more interesting?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“What?” I was curious.

“Ito Sota told the judges himself that he wanted to stand trial,” she answered.

“*Ooh…*”

“I thought maybe his side was just trying to end this before the situation gets even worse, but… I don’t think that’s the case. Seeing them working hard made me think that maybe we don’t have enough information on them,” she explained.

“I see…”

“You’re not exactly innocent either, Oppa. Of course, I don’t know if the information that Ito Sota has would have any influence in the trial, but considering the fact that he asked to stand trial himself, it’s most likely that the information we have on them is fake, or the information’s so good that no one will doubt it,” she remarked.

“Do you also think so?” I asked.

“You don’t seem that surprised… did you already think of a way to handle this kind of situation beforehand?” she asked.

“*Pfft… hehe*. Something like that. Do you remember me telling you that I had a lot of insurance?” I asked, snickering.

“I do.”

“I prepared several plans for different situations and naturally, I had also thought of the situation where Ito Sota himself would request to stand trial so that he could attack me in court…” I explained.

“*Hmmm*…”

“I can guarantee that he picked the worst option and if he moves based on my assumption… *pffft.* He’ll know exactly what it feels like to get backstabbed. Look forward to it, noona,” I told her with a hint of mystery in my voice.

1. The Benigoa Goddess is the main subject of their devotion, but there are other gods at well ☜

CHAPTER 133
WITCH HUNT (3)

Ito Sota's trial was getting closer. The sentence was simple, but it had a big meaning behind it. The chaotic citizens of Lindel clinked their drinks while cheering that this was justice while the citizens of Celia were confused by the sudden news. Even though Ito Sota himself was the one that asked to stand trial, the citizens of Lindel and Celia wouldn't know about this. We didn't think it was necessary to tell people that Sota requested it himself and even he believed it wasn't necessary to tell the people of Celia.

Since I was the victim last time, he was the victim this time, but the only thing that mattered to us was Sota was on trial, and thanks to Kasugano Yuno, she was already somewhat stopping the Japanese from fabricating lies to manipulate public opinion.

'Assailant… '

There wasn't a need for the people to know the inside story. All they needed to know was that Sota was on trial because he was the assailant and the innocent Lee Ki-Young had been arrested and tried for attempted murder.

'This is more than enough.'

The trial wasn't going to proceed normally. The content of the trial that was publicly announced was regarding Ito Sota's level of punishment for being the assailant that harmed Lee Ki-Young, but the important figures in this trial knew this was a political fight and that was the reason why Lee Ji-Hye was feeling anxious.

"It happened all of a sudden so I'm not sure if I prepared everything, oppa," Lee Ji-Hye said, anxious.

"It's more than enough, Ji-Hye noona. You spoke with the judges and the people at the Vatican weren't that bad either," I said, comforting her.

"I'm anxious, but I have an idea as to what you're hiding. Even though you have insurance, I'm still worried since there's no guarantee it'll actually work… the trial

could just be an excuse since the trials here are a bit different from the modern world. If you think about what he'll say in order to defend himself… isn't it natural for me to be worried?" she asked.

"No need to worry. Ito Sota-san is smart," I told her.

Lee Ji-Hye looked at me quietly; this was the first time I saw her like this. She seemed like she knew something, but it was fine. The fact that Lee Ji-Hye had discovered my plan meant that Ito Sota should somehow know about it too.

"I'll trust you," she said with a determined look.

"You can trust me, noona." I smiled.

Even though she felt anxious, she seemed like she had made the decision to forget about it. It was great because if Lee Ji-Hye decided not to get involved it meant that everything was going as planned. She was curious as to what Ito Sota was going to do to me, but I had already calculated everything and the reason why I set up so many traps was that I was trying my best not to get caught. However, she couldn't help but ask about my plan since she still had a lot of questions in mind. Waiting for the trial was boring anyway, so she thought it wouldn't be bad to know about it before it happened.

"Are you curious?" I asked.

"I would be lying if I said I wasn't. I'm just not caring about it because you told me not to, but I know that's how you set up traps. You're not implying that me moving around freely is getting in the way, right? I've been doing that because people will become suspicious if we move in a group," she said.

"That's not what I meant. Normally, it would be better if you helped me because I'll be able to create an even more perfect trap. The reason why I was working on my plan without you was that I wanted to show Ito Sota that I was being cautious and that's my insurance. What do you think? How do you think my plan is going? Actually, let me ask this first. How far do you think a simple conviction can take you? What do you think my original plan was?" I asked with a smile.

Lee Ji-Hye slowly answered after thinking for a while. "The first thing is…"

"Yeah?"

"…Is to bring an end to Ito Sota's political life. After isolating him from both the pope and the emperor, I'm sure you're planning on ending him ever so slowly. The method…" Lee Ji-Hye slowly said.

"Yes?"

"It's the potion you're currently distributing in Japan. I'm sure there are others, but I think the rest are just ways to grab everyone's attention since the rumors about the slave trade and organ trafficking are all fake," she remarked.

"You knew?" I asked.

"I don't have any evidence, but based on the flow and conviction… I thought that's what happened and of course, I'm the only person that knows. I didn't do any investigation and even if I did, there would be a limit to how much I can find out since my movements are limited. Wasn't it your plan to use drugs as evidence and tie it with his other offenses to bring him down?" Lee Ji-Hye asked, doubtful.

"Explain it simpler, noona."

"Your original plan was to bring down Ito Sota using fabricated information by telling people that his guild, the Yamato Guild, was distributing drugs in Celia," she explained.

"Right, that's the first part and why do you think I didn't tell you or other people about this plan?" I asked her.

"Because you need to be careful. I'm sure there are other reasons, but that's the best reason I can think of," she answered.

"You're not wrong, noona. But as I told you earlier, the most important part of this plan is for me to look as cautious as possible. It's to make people think that I'm preparing such a heavy blow that I didn't even dare to tell my most trusted agents about it for fear of an information leak ruining everything," I explained.

"That's…"

"The information that I fabricated is also a heavy blow and the attempted murder case of Lee Ki-Young is nothing more than a rite of passage. If Ito Sota doesn't realize the fact that there's a new potion being distributed within the city, he'll get hit hard

with drug trafficking charges and he'll be framed for distributing illegal potions. That's the first method," I told her.

"I understand," she commented.

"There's another variable here and it's under the assumption that Ito Sota knows about the potions," I said.

"Okay…"

"If he becomes suspicious of the potions that I'm currently distributing and realizes that it's a trap, he'll start an investigation and personally, I think this will most likely happen since he had requested to stand trial on his own."

"I agree." Lee Ji-Hye nodded.

"It'll be difficult for him to find anything because this information is something only Kasugano Yuno and I know about. If he was competent, he could obtain or fabricate the information, but I'm sure he would be anxious during the investigation. As I mentioned before, you weren't involved in this plan at all, so I'm sure you were thinking about different things while investigating. You probably thought it was strange because there was no evidence. For example…"

When I remained quiet for a moment, Lee Ji-Hye quickly spoke. "For example, the fact that this was the only plan you had?"

"That's right," I answered.

"I think I understand now, but what if Ito Sota *does* know about the potions? He'll know that you're trying to bring him down using the potions and he'll know your plan after that, so what are you going to do if that happens?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"What do you think my next move is?" I asked her with a smile.

"If I were you, I would put the blame on Kasugano Yuno because I think tying her with Ito Sota and bringing them both down is the most reasonable method. If Ito Sota told the court that the potions being distributed in Celia were Kasugano Yuno and Lee Ki-Young's doing and not his, then using her is the only way for you to get out of that mess, right?" she asked.

"*Pffft.*" I chuckled.

"Lying and bringing them both down is the best method, but abandoning Kasugano Yuno like this is a bit unfortunate, oppa. If I guessed right, then it'll be better to change your plan right now. I understand that you're angry, but wasting that shaman on that crazy bastard isn't worth it," she said while shaking her head.

"Am I that much of a scumbag for you?" I asked with a frown.

"I was just thinking about what I would do if I were in your place because that's the most reasonable choice for me," she answered.

"You're right. It's the most reasonable choice, but I don't plan on abandoning Kasugano Yuno. Let's pretend Ito Sota really did succeed in investigating the potions and told the court during his trial that I was the one distributing the potions, which would place me in a dangerous situation," I said.

"Okay…"

"His assumption would be wrong from the start, noona," I told her.

"What do you mean?"

"It's not a drug."

"What?" she asked, dumbfounded.

"It's not a drug. If I say it's a drug, then it's a drug, but if I testify saying it isn't a drug, then it is not a drug," I explained.

"*Oh…*"

"If Ito Sota doesn't know about the potion, then the potion will become a drug and he'll immediately be labeled as a drug offender and will either lose his head or eat a heavy blow. On the other hand, if he finds out about the potion distribution and calls me a drug offender, then those potions won't be a drug," I added.

"How is that possible?" Lee Ji-Hye asked, shocked.

"Why is it *not* possible? I'm the only one that can detect the ingredients because

there isn't a single third party on this continent who knows about alchemy better than me, noona. Those potions are my original work and unless they open my head, they'll never know the recipe," I answered.

"*Oh…"* Lee Ji-Hye gasped.

"I'll tell you a secret…"

"Sure," she said, nodding.

"Do you know what catalyst those potions are based on?" I asked her.

"…"

"It's holy water," I answered.

"What?" she asked surprisingly.

"It's holy water. It's the same holy water that's officially being used in the Benigoa Holy Empire. The moment Ito Sota says that those potions are drugs, it'll be checkmate. Calling a potion made from holy water a drug is basically blasphemy. *Hahahaha*. What is he going to do even if he discovers the potion? There's nothing he can do and he'll never know that the potion's made from holy water," I explained.

"…"

"*Hahahaha*. It'll be better if he doesn't know anything and just dies as a drug offender. The moment he tries to flip the situation by telling people that I distributed drugs, the heresy inquisitors will come marching over to him! *Hahaha*. *Cough, cough*. I do acknowledge the fact that he's smart, Ji-Hye, but so what? Whether Ito Sota is smart or dumb, the moment my potions entered Japan, it was already game over since that bastard isn't an alchemist," I told her.

"I see…" she commented.

"Everything has already been set. *Hahahaha!* That's why I said he made the worst choice, noona. If he tries to attack me by using the potions I distributed, then he would make the worst decision. The inquisitors will wipe out his family and guild members since this is the Holy Empire," I added.

I noticed Lee Ji-Hye staring at me quietly and I was sure that she was organizing her thoughts. Even though there were a lot of possible decisions Ito Sota could make, there were only two that would most likely happen.

First likely scenario was if Ito Sota had no idea about the potions. What I prepared for that was fabricated evidence that the Yamato Guild was distributing drugs, so his life would end by being labeled as a drug distributor. Second scenario waws if Ito Sota *knew* about the potions and brought over evidence to show that I was the drug distributor, then I could show the potion's recipe. Afterward, I could then calmly say that I was the one that distributed this great potion, so basically, it would be blasphemy on his part. No matter which decision he would make, he would still be going to hell.

I couldn't help but laugh.

"*Hahahahaha*!"

Naturally, I thought about how I had been laughing often nowadays and Lee Ji-Hye's face turned red as she looked at me.

"Oppa," she called out.

"Yeah?"

"You're really sexy, oppa," she complimented.

"You just have a weird taste in men," I told her.

"You're definitely shitty, but you're still really charming," Lee Ji-Hye complimented once more.

"…"

I was at a loss for words hearing her call me *shitty.*

When I looked at my watch, I noticed that a lot of time had passed and it was time to go to court. When I spoke as I stood up, Lee Ji-Hye nodded.

"Let's finish this, Ji-Hye."

“I'm really looking forward to it, Ki-Young oppa,” she said.

CHAPTER 134
LIES MIXED WITH TRUTH (1)

When you were in court, you would have to be disciplined in body and mind. I didn't really care about the mind, but outer appearance was important and I thought I needed to prepare more than I had done for the previous social gathering. Lee Ji-Hye took care of me this time too and after learning her lesson from the last incident, Jung Ha-Yan intentionally wandered around and interfered with the Black Swan Guild's member's work. After I thanked the members, Jung Ha-Yan looked at me with satisfaction, but she didn't contribute even one percent to this work.

When I walked with Lee Ji-Hye, the leader of the agents, I saw the quiet courthouse and my agent[1] had already taken her seat. When I saw Sister Jessica, Sister Helena, and the other important figures, I slightly nodded and saw them smiling with satisfaction.

'The religious leaders are important.'

Father Basel was always smiling but today, he looked serious for some reason and since he was one of my precious insurance, I needed to manage him carefully.

'A religious trial can only be held by priests that are above cardinals.'

The jury was sitting opposite them. The jury was normally picked randomly, but seeing Lady Caitlyn and Lady Marilyn sitting there, it made me think that it wasn't the case this time. They didn't have a jury system, so I couldn't say that they had a lot of power, but seeing them sitting there was uplifting. When our eyes met, they smiled.

There were a lot of spectators sitting in a circle in the courtroom and it felt like a colosseum where gladiators fought each other with swords. I was sure there wasn't going to be a battle, but it wasn't a bad comparison.

"This is a fight after all," I commented.

"*Huh?*" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“It’s nothing, Miss Ji-Hye.” I shrugged with a smile.

“How boring…” she muttered.

When I shook my head saying it was nothing, she looked back at the documents. Since we didn’t know what was going to happen, she was checking the different countermeasures and other factors that could affect the trial. After waiting anxiously, people started to take their seats in the empty seats.

The judges had already discussed this case and Cha Hee-Ra and Kasugano Yuno were sitting in the witness stand and…

“Defendant, please come in.”

Our lovely Ito Sota entered. As one door opened, the bastard walked in confidently. He looked around the room as if to show that he wasn’t a criminal, but the handcuffs around his hand showed everyone that he was the assailant. My precious comrades sitting in the audience seat started talking…

“Look at that trash.”

“How dare he look at us with that face?”

I didn’t need to explain the fact that the room immediately became heated and when the people on Ito Sota’s side started yelling, the audience yelled at each other and started pointing fingers. However, the commotion didn’t last long because we heard the Chief Justice’s voice.

“Everyone, please be quiet. Starting now, anyone that causes a commotion in the sacred court will be escorted out of the room regardless of the reason for the commotion,” they said.

“…”

“This trial opened after we received a request from Ito Sota, the guild master of the Yamato Guild and before we start the trial, we’ll pray to the goddess of Benigoa. Father Basel will lead the prayer,” they announced.

“Let us pray,” Basel said.

There were always complicated or annoying procedures everywhere. Even though I wanted them to start the trial right away, I kept my silence. While everyone had their eyes closed to pray, I slightly opened my eyes to look at Ito Sota, and I saw him looking at me.

'He's angry.'

Ito Sota-san was obviously angry and it was only natural for him to remember how I had placed him in a bind as he left to get questioned. The way he stared at me with bloodshot eyes reminded me of a demon and if we weren't in the courthouse right now, he would have already ripped me into pieces.

'Damn, he's scary.'

Of course, I was scared, but after realizing that he couldn't move, I realized that I had no reason to be scared. Victor Hart and the imperial knights were close to me in case something happened and since Ito Sota's hands were completely tied up, he couldn't possibly harm me. Naturally, I raised my middle finger once again. When I smiled brightly and stuck my tongue out at him, I noticed blood sliding down from the lips Ito Sota was biting.

'What are you going to do about it? You can stare at me all you want, you bastard.'

"*Pffft*…"

I found it difficult not to laugh. I knew I had to remain quiet during prayer time, but seeing him throwing a fit had always been fun to watch. Out of all the resentment I received so far, this was the worst, and even though I wanted to compliment him for not releasing his killing intent, I wasn't planning on putting my middle finger down.

"Please bless us a fair trial…"

"I would like to thank Father Basel for the prayer. Now, the trial will last 60 minutes…"

I nodded when the Chief Justice explained the procedure because I already know all these.

"We'll start with the plaintiff's testimony. Miss Lee Ji-Hye is the representative of Mr. Lee Ki-Young, so we'll start with their statement. Please begin," they said.

“Honorable Chief Justice. Before I start, I would like you to look at the data we have compiled,” Lee Ji-Hye requested.

“Please bring the data,” they said.

“The first incident didn’t start on the 18th during the social event. My client, Mr. Lee Ki-Young, has constantly been receiving threats and has been in danger because of the deal between Lee Seol-Ho of the Blue Guild and the Yamato Guild,” Lee Ji-Hye explained.

“Please continue…”

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young was first harmed last year on October 1st and I’m sure all of you could still remember the terrorist attack in Lindel. The terrorist attack specifically targeted my client and it wasn’t a random attack at all. Through this incident, dozens of innocent Lindel citizens died. While the Blue Guild, Red Mercenary Guild, and the Black Swan Guild were investigating Lee Seol-Ho, we discovered that he has been in contact with Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild and we even acquired evidence of it, but a few days later on October 7, we found his corpse near the Ramadel Mountain,” she added.

‘Good job, my Ji-Hye.’

“We noticed that Lee Seol-Ho’s body was tortured many times and had injuries everywhere. We even found traces of wounds caused by a katana, a weapon that the Yamato Guild mainly uses. I’ll make sure the data I submit and images of Lee Seol-Ho’s corpse will be submitted later as evidence,” she told them.

Obviously, these were all fabricated because the ones that killed Lee Seol-Ho weren’t them, but us. Still, it wasn’t difficult to use the old man’s corpse in our favor.

“The majority of the assassins that had been involved in the terrorist attack killed themselves before we could capture them, but the poison we discovered in their bodies was a common poison used by Japanese assassins to commit suicide and avoid interrogation,” she explained.

“Objection. There’s no proof that the poison used by the assassins during the terrorist attack belonged to the Yamato Guild. It’s inappropriate to be used as evidence.”

“We’ll accept it as evidence for now. Please bring the related documents,” the judge said.

“Okay, Your Honor,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

That information wasn’t fabricated. We didn’t have proof that the assassins were from the Yamato Guild, but depending on how we used it, we could turn that information into evidence.

“We weren’t able to do a background check, but we found out that the majority of them were Japanese assassins from the Free City of Celia. The weapons they were wielding and the spell mechanisms proved they were from the Free City of Celia and I’ll submit proof for that as well,” she explained.

As expected, Ito Sota’s agent started objecting to Ji-Hye’s claims.

“Objection. Even if the spell mechanisms and weapons were from the Free City of Celia, there’s no proof that the assassins were *actually* from Celia. A professionally trained group must have fabricated this to frame the Yamato Guild…”

“We’ll accept it as evidence for now,” the judge said, interrupting the agent.

“This is absurd!” Sota’s agent yelled.

“Please be quiet. The plaintiff hasn’t finished their testimony yet,” the judge retorted.

The judges were eagerly accepting pieces of evidence that were somewhat lacking and at this point, Ito Sota should know that there was something wrong.

‘Hahahaha… ’

Lee Ji-Hye had already met with the Chief Justice of the Holy Empire several times and even though she didn’t hear them say that they would take our side, they had already accepted many things from our side, so I was sure that they would be willing to turn a blind eye to these tiny details. The fair trial mentioned in the prayer was nowhere to be found.

“Objection! That evidence is…”

“I think it’s enough to be submitted as evidence. Please bring the related documents,”

the judge said.

“Yes, Your Honor,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

This too…

“Objection! This is simply an assumption, not hard evidence. Please consider the possibility of the document being fabricated,” the agent pleaded.

“Order! The plaintiff is still giving their testimony and I’ll take a look at the related documents first. Please bring the documents over,” the judge said.

“Thank you, honorable Chief Justice,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

This one too…

“Objection!”

“I’ll accept it.”

“Thank you, Your Honor.”

And this one as well…

There was so much evidence that it seemed like Ito Sota was receiving judgment rather than being put on trial. Every time the people were asked to remain quiet by the court, the Chief Justice would nod and applaud for them, but when Ito Sota’s side started talking and yelling, the Chief Justice would give them a cold look.

Nothing was lacking. No matter how much Ito Sota’s side said the evidence was fabricated, they were already submitted as evidence and the traps we had set up were all showing that it was the Yamato Guild’s doing.

“The Juliena case is similar as well, Your Honor. In order to frame my client, Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild used the information he had obtained from Lee Seol-Ho and the Lindel terrorist attack to label him as a murderer. If you look at the legendary Juliena’s item information, she only moves when my client is in danger,” Lee Ji-Hye explained.

“I see,” the judge commented.

“Kazuma Hiroyuki of the Yamato Guild received an order from Ito Sota to give off a threatening energy toward my client and to support this, I would like to submit additional analysis data on Juliena’s movement patterns as well as Kasugano Yuno’s testimony,” she said.

“I will check the documents. Will Kasugano Yuno of the Yozora Guild please come up to the witness stand?” the Chief Justice requested.

“Yes… what I first saw was…”

It couldn’t get any smoother than this and Kasugano Yuno’s testimony itself was very credible. The jury and the religious figures nodded while listening to Kasugano Yuno’s vivid testimony and after she was done, Lee Ji-Hye continued.

“Please make your final statement, plaintiff,” the judge said.

“Yes, Your Honor. I’m sure all of you can still remember the attempted murder case from the recent social gathering. Thanks to Miss Cha Hee-Ra, it became an *attempted* murder case and I don’t think I need to submit evidence for the sin Ito Sota had committed at the gathering where nobles and religious figures had been gathered. Based on all the statements and evidence that I submitted, you can’t deny the fact that Ito Sota has ill-will against my client, and on that day, everyone even saw how he intentionally planted mana into my client’s arm.”

“Okay…”

“I won’t submit evidence regarding that case because everyone here is the witness. Thank you,” she said, finishing her statement.

Ito Sota’s agent made several comments during her testimony, but it wasn’t enough to change the people’s minds. I wasn’t sure how they were going to refute it, but…

‘It probably won’t end here.’

Ito Sota wouldn’t just let it end here and I was sure that he wouldn't go down *that* easily since he was competent and smart.

‘Well then, show me what you got.’

I was certain that he had fabricated evidence and as expected, Ito Sota started

talking.

“It’s not true. Miss Lee Ji-Hye’s statement is a bit different from the truth.”

‘I knew it.’

“The Lindel terrorist attack, the Juliena case and the attempted murder case weren’t my doing and to be exact, the Japanese may be the ones behind it, but I can say with certainty that I wasn’t involved in any of those cases,” Sota said.

“Please refrain from making absurd remarks, defendant,” the Chief Justice warned.

“It’s not an absurd remark. Everyone and honorable Chief Justice. I know this is a bit sudden, but have you heard of the fantasy potion that’s currently being distributed in Japan?” Sota asked.

As expected… he took the bait.

‘I’m glad Ito Sota is competent.’

I was relieved that he had caught on to the small changes happening around him to the extent that he had obtained a result that should have been unobtainable. I was also glad that he had done a background check on me and the fantasy potion using the fabricated evidence I had laid out for him.

‘Hahahahahaha… ’

I was already laughing inside my head, but I remained quiet.

‘Good job, you smart piece of shit.’

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1. Although contextually it should be lawyer, we decided to go with agent since they do other things outside of court, such as running errands. ☜

CHAPTER 135
LIES MIXED WITH TRUTH (2)

'He noticed!'

If he was an idiot, he probably wouldn't have noticed what was going on around him, but I knew Ito Sota would catch on since he was a cautious person. The timing wasn't bad either. Before we could bring him down using the potions, he mentioned it first, so it was the perfect timing for us. Seeing that arrogant look on his face made it really hard for me to hold in my laughter, but of course, I made sure to have a grim look.

'I'm surprised… '

I had to hypnotize myself.

'I'm in a crisis right now.'

Displaying a frustrated expression wasn't easy…

'Maybe I should take acting class?'

I was certain that I could find an acting school or an actor if I searched through Lindel.

While I was having different thoughts, all the while holding back my laughter, Ito Sota continued as if he was about to deal a decisive blow. He must have felt everyone looking at him because he looked at the audience and seeing him full of confidence made it difficult to label him as a sinner. I saw one of his agents taking out a small potion and without a doubt, it was the potion I made.

"This is the fantasy potion that's currently being distributed in Japan," Ito Sota said.

"Please refrain from making remarks that are not related to the trial!" the Chief Justice yelled.

I was glad I told Lee Ji-Hye ahead of time.

Lee Ji-Hye slammed the table as if she was flustered and her actions and expressions made it seem as if she had been caught red-handed.

“Objection! Your Honor, that man is making remarks that aren’t related to this trial!” Lee Ji-Hye yelled.

“That’s not true, Your Honor. What I’m about to tell you will definitely play an important role in this trial and it’s the key issue. Your Honor, please allow me to make my statement,” Ito Sota requested.

The Chief Justice shook his head at Ito Sota’s request, but I guess there was a judge that was on his side. When that judge whispered to the Chief Justice, they nodded as if they didn’t have a choice.

“I’ll allow it,” the Chief Justice said.

“Thank you…”

‘Nice, nice.’

“As I’ve explained before, this potion called fantasy potion is currently being distributed in Japan. It hasn’t been that long since they started selling this, but this potion has been selling on the black market for a long time now. It costs 20 gold per bottle and to some, it may be cheap, but to others, it may be expensive,” Ito Sota explained.

“So, what’s the issue, defendant?”

“The issue is the effect of this potion. Your Honor, just like its name, the potion allows people to see the illusion they want to see, so it’s a type of hallucinogen. Not only that but it’s very addictive,” he added.

“Objection, Your Honor,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Please continue…” the judge on their side said.

Her timing to interfere with his statement was perfect. Lee Ji-Hye frowned as if she was angry and her acting was so good that I would even believe her if I had no idea

what was going on. Ito Sota looked at Lee Ji-Hye's expression for a moment before continuing. "Yes. This potion is addictive and it's almost like a drug."

'Bingo!'

Good job, Ito Sota!

I actually wanted to cheer him on.

Now, the problem was how he was going to connect this potion to us. If he was going to forcefully make the connection, then he would be making the wrong choice, but based on his expression, I think there was something more to this, so I decided to continue watching for now.

"The Yamato Guild has been keeping an eye on this potion ever since it started selling on the black market and we worked very hard to figure out the source of this potion. It's not an exaggeration to call this potion a drug and not only did we find out that this potion had given them an unfair advantage, but we were curious about who was trying to sicken the free city," Sota explained.

"…"

"We first found a trace on October 1st when the Lindel terrorist attack took place. The plaintiff pegged us as the criminals, but it was a misunderstanding because after our guild investigated it, we found out that Kage, a small guild in the Free City of Celia, were the ones that attacked Mr. Lee Ki-Young," he said.

'He sure is talented in talking bullshit.'

"Are you saying you have evidence related to this issue?" the Chief Justice asked.

"I do, Your Honor," he answered.

Seeing the Chief Justice read the document Ito Sota had carefully prepared made me think that it was very well-made. I was sure it would be difficult for him to fabricate information about a small guild named Kage in a short period of time, so it was likely that he was using the guild as a scapegoat.

"Kage is a guild full of criminals that distribute and make money through illegal items and potions. They're located all around the city, so they're considered a

troublesome guild within the Free City of Celia. At first, it was just a simple assumption, and even though we were unable to find out why the Kage Guild targeted Mr. Lee Ki-Young, we discovered a small hint about it," Sota explained even more.

"And that is?"

"We found proof that the Lindel terrorist attack wasn't a simple terrorist attack but a turf war between drug groups," he answered.

'Wow… '

"Defendant, are you saying that…"

"That's right! The person that smuggled this fantasy potion into Japan, turned the power struggle between drug groups into a terrorist attack, and is the owner of the new guild, Sora, is none other than Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Sota answered.

'This is perfect.'

That was the most perfect blow. It was true that I was the owner of the new guild, Sora and it was also true that I was the one who smuggled and distributed the fantasy potion into Japan. The only part that wasn't true was what he said about the Lindel terrorist attack being a power struggle between drug groups. The way Ito Sota mixed lies with the truth was very familiar to me.

Now, the issue was whether the judges were going to accept them as evidence, but the evidence they had provided was certainly of good quality.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young, who's currently sitting in the plaintiff seat with a frown colluded with Kasugano Yuno of the Yozora Guild and created a new guild. The name of that guild is Sora. The only reason why he brought in Kasugano Yuno was to officially distribute the potion and only sell it on the black market. Their plan worked out brilliantly," Sota said.

'Correct.'

"They created a system where they could legally distribute this drug called fantasy potion by tricking people that it was a medical potion," he added.

'It's not a drug, but you're right… '

"In less than a few days, they succeeded in making a net profit of tens of thousands of gold," he sprinkled some more.

It wasn't just tens of thousands of gold. We had already obtained a large amount of money, but anyway, this was a surprising situation. I had never imagined that he would find out so much information within a short period of time. It was also a shocker how he had fabricated all these while his movements were restricted. He was definitely a competent person.

When I slightly frowned, Ito Sota continued talking as if he was enjoying it.

"I'm sure you know that the holy knights and our guild had done a separate investigation regarding the recent Juliena incident and based on the investigation, we found something interesting. Kazuma Hiroyuki, who got killed by Juliena, was actually trying to kill Mr. Lee Ki-Young. As such, it's true that Juliena attacked Kazuma Hiroyuki because it detected him threatening its owner," Sota explained.

"Defendant, are you saying that you admit to the crime that was committed in the Juliena case?" the Chief Justice asked.

"Yes, it's my fault for not managing my guild members correctly. Kazuma Hiroyuki had two identities while he was in the Yamato Guild, but since he had been a part of our guild, it's only right that I receive the punishment for it," he answered.

"So you're saying…"

"Kazuma Hiroyuki was also part of the Kage Guild. When the assassination in Lindel ended up being a failure, he tried to assassinate Mr. Lee Ki-Young within the castle and I'm sure the Kage Guild had no choice but to do that. It's exactly what you'd expect from conflicts between drug groups because if the fantasy potion successfully landed in the market, then the drug the Kage Guild was trying to sell wouldn't sell at all," Sota said.

"…"

"I'm sure they wanted to kill Mr. Lee Ki-Young of the Sora Guild no matter the cost," he added.

What a well-written script. The storyline was so great that he could be called a playwright. He was making the two assassination attempts seem like it was a fight between drug cartels and anyone would enjoy listening to this story.

“Do you have proof that Mr. Lee Ki-Young created and distributed the fantasy potion?” the Chief Justice asked.

“Of course, honorable Chief Justice. The fantasy potion is a variant of the mental healing potion that the Blue Guild used while they were taking control of the Cursed Shrine. If you read the Cursed Shrine control log that the Blue Guild is selling, you’ll see that there’s a big portion that talks about the fantasy potion,” Sota answered.

“Go on, defendant.”

“According to the Blue Guild’s control log, the Cursed Shrine dungeon inflicts hallucination and auditory hallucination after a certain period of time and Mr. Lee Ki-Young believed that to suppress those hallucinations that made people crazy, making them see a different hallucination was the answer. That theory was what led him to create this fantasy potion. The only difference between the potion they used in the Cursed Shrine and the fantasy potion is that the latter’s addictive,” he pointed out.

“Objection, Your Honor! The defendant is trying to cleverly exclude the assassination attempt by changing the subject. The main topic of this trial is the assassination attempt at the social gathering, not the fantasy potion.” Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

“That’s not true, Your Honor. I’m certain all of these are related and I swear on the Benigoa goddess that I wasn’t behind the assassination attempt that happened at the social gathering. It’s difficult to tell why that happened to Mr. Lee Ki-Young’s body, but I believe this incident is also related to the Kage Guild. If you consider the connection between this fantasy potion and Mr. Lee Ki-Young, it wouldn’t be strange for them to target him. The reason why Mr. Lee Ki-Young framed me and my guild was that he knew we were investigating the fantasy potion. I think we should consider the possibility that the assassination attempt had also been planned by him,” Sota explained.

‘Great… ’

“I know this trial isn’t a trial about the fantasy potion, Your Honor, but the fact that

this potion is related to all of these is something that can't be denied. Additionally, if you can consider how dangerous this potion is, I believe we need to hear from Mr. Lee Ki-Young about what the truth really is," he suggested.

Ito Sota was perfect and I guess he was greatly satisfied with what he had done because he nodded. Naturally, the audience started sympathizing with him and I understood why they reacted that way because the evidence Ito Sota had presented showed that I was the bad guy. I couldn't say that all of the evidence was fabricated because half of it was true. I wasn't sure how he was able to get so much information about me, but I wanted to applaud him for digging deeper and deeper to eventually come to this conclusion.

Now, it was my time to talk. When I glanced at Ito Sota, I noticed him smirking and he looked as if he was certain that he had already won this trial. Obviously, I was no longer frowning. Instead, there was a smile on my face.

'Pffft!'

I looked at him with a smile and nodded as if I was thanking him. The way he looked flustered the more my expression changed was amusing to watch and the moment I started talking with composure, Ito Sota frowned.

"It's true that I distributed them, Your Honor."

CHAPTER 136
THIRD CARD (1)

“It’s true that I distributed them, Your Honor,” I said.

I tried my best to hold in my laughter and as soon as I finished my sentence, I noticed the audience talking amongst themselves. Father Basel looked calm, but the others were surprised by the sudden change in the situation. It was a natural response because if people discovered their kind neighbor was a drug offender, most of them would react that way. I was a bit embarrassed to say this, but my image within the empire was extremely good.

I guess Ito Sota thought I had something up my sleeve because he quickly started talking. “How shameless are you to confidently confess your sins? Your Honor, is there a need to hear any more words from this man? The defendant and plaintiff have clearly changed so let’s arrest him and follow the procedure…”

“Arrest and follow the procedure? It’s true that I distributed them, but I have never confessed my sins. You’re still the defendant,” I pointed out.

“If selling drugs in the free city isn’t a sin, then what is? I guess you can say that making an innocent person an assailant is a sin as well,” Sota said.

“What I’m trying to tell you is that I don’t understand what you’re saying, Mr. Ito Sota,” I told him.

“It’s just like I’ve explained earlier, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Didn’t you just confess that you distributed the drugs?” he asked.

“So what is it that you’re trying to say, Mr. Sota?” I asked.

“If you’re going to pretend…”

“The fantasy potion isn’t a drug. It’s not,” I said, interrupting him.

I wanted to laugh so bad when I saw Ito Sota’s flustered face. He had no idea what

my thought process was or what I was going to do at all. He probably thought about the possibility of me bluffing, but since he was cautious, he was making his move based on the possibility that I had a plan.

“Your Honor, the fantasy potion I distributed can’t be considered a drug. Please allow me to explain to you and everyone here about the fantasy potion I’ve been distributing,” I requested.

“We… definitely need an explanation,” the Chief Justice said.

“Your Honor!”

“Please explain…”

Awesome.

“The majority of Ito Sota’s testimony is correct. I created a mental healing potion while I was in the Cursed Shrine and it’s also true that I created this fantasy potion based on *that* healing potion. I created a new guild with Kasugano Yuno and have been distributing the potions through that guild. I can’t confirm whether the potion has been sold in the black market, but I’m sure it’s most likely true,” I started.

“Please continue…”

“Obviously, there are more lies than truth in a testimony. Sota lied about how Lindel’s terrorist attack was a fight between drug groups and he also lied about how Kazuma Hiroyuki was a member of the Kage Guild and of course, he lied about how I planned the assassination attempt,” I explained.

“Your Honor!” Ito Sota yelled.

“Please be quiet, defendant. Just like your testimony earlier, the plaintiff’s testimony will be important to this trial as well,” the Chief Justice said with a frown.

After maintaining a good relationship with the Chief Justice, I guess he wanted our side to win this trial, and seeing him discreetly rooting for me energized me.

“Sota’s biggest lie was his absurd statement about how the fantasy potion is a drug,” I told them.

“Do you have proof?” the judge asked.

“To be exact, the fantasy potion was created with the goal of treating people,” I added.

“Treating people?”

“That’s right. Just like the mental healing potion I used in the Cursed Shrine, I created the fantasy potion and distributed them with the goal of treating people. The defendant testified that the Kage Guild and I were fighting over territory all this time, but that’s not the case. Ito Sota’s guild was actually the one that joined hands with the Kage Guild,” I explained.

The story about the Yamato Guild and Kage Guild becoming allies was the story I originally planned on telling and even though I didn’t have proof I could submit right now, I thought that talking about it would be more effective.

“…”

“I’m sure all of you heard it from somewhere…”

‘Because I’m the one that spread it.’

“The rumors about the Yamato Guild being involved in slave trade, organ trafficking, illegal drug handling, and managing the black market.” I continued.

“I object, Your Honor! It's a groundless rumor and the evidence to be submitted isn’t enough to be used as proof!” Ito Sota yelled.

“You’ll know about the biggest evidence later because this is just the beginning. Your Honor, I’ll start from the time when Kasugano Yuno of the Yozora Guild came to find me. It’s a story about a drug that was being distributed illegally within Japan for a very long time now and yes, it’s actually called a drug and not a fantasy potion. The Free City of Celia was already exposed to this illegal drug and Kasugano Yuno told me that many people had always been in pain because of it,” I explained.

“…”

“She came to me asking for a remedy,” I added.

“I see…”

“That’s right, the fantasy potion is a remedy for the illegal drug, which is now difficult to find in Celia. Not only was the Blue Guild and Yozora Guild curing the drug addicts, but we also wanted to find out where this illegal drug was being distributed from. That’s probably when it all started,” I said.

“What are you saying, plaintiff?” the Chief Justice asked.

“The reason why they constantly threatened to assassinate me was that they didn’t want me to find out the truth. Aside from the Lindel terrorist attack, I’ve received many threats as well. We were having a hard time finding out exactly which group was managing Japan’s drug market, but thanks to the assassination attempts, I realized many things. As it was mentioned at the beginning of the trial, the Yamato Guild were the ones that tried to assassinate me, but actually, it could’ve been the Kage Guild. I’m referring to the Kage Guild member that received the order from the Yamato Guild,” I added.

“Everything is a lie, Your Honor. There’s no proof that the fantasy potion actually cures the existing drug circulating in Celia and I’m curious as to how the addictive fantasy potion could cure people addicted to that drug.” Ito Sota objected.

“Why are you claiming that it can’t cure it, Mr. Ito Sota? The fantasy potion has already proven its effectiveness in the Cursed Shrine and what do you mean by addictive? Please watch what you say. The fantasy potion is a little bit addictive, but calling it a *drug* is the same thing as calling wine a drug as well,” I told him.

“That’s…”

“It was originally released as medicine and if someone didn’t intentionally stop the distribution, then it would have been distributed to everyone already. Your Honor, the reason why Ito Sota constantly threatened me was that he was trying to stop me from distributing the fantasy potion as a medicine,” I proclaimed.

“That’s absurd, Your Honor. The alchemists in our guild found weed components in the potion which turns it into an addictive hallucinogen.” Ito Sota defended himself.

I couldn’t help but be surprised. I knew they were going to try and reverse-engineer the potion to find out its ingredients, but I never thought they would actually find the catalyst I used. Seeing them utilize competent alchemists was worthy of applause,

but there wasn't an alchemist more competent than me on the continent.

"Since you've already discovered the ingredients, I can't help but be doubtful about your actions. Your Honor, despite discovering the ingredients, he's still calling the potion a *drug*." I pointed out.

"The potion contains weed, so what else should we call it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young?" Ito Sota asked.

"Mr. Ito Sota, did you thoroughly investigate the potion? If you did, then you wouldn't be able to say the words you said just now; no, you shouldn't be saying them," I told him.

"What…"

"The fantasy potion was made out of holy water, Mr. Ito Sota," I declared.

"…"

"…"

"…"

Including Ito Sota, everyone became very quiet and I wanted to laugh because of how funny the situation was. They finally realized that this trial had become a bit strange. Ito Sota started to panic and I noticed him looking at Father Basel as well as the other religious figures.

'Pffft!'

He didn't seem like someone who had the power to control a city.

"That's what medicines are, Mr. Ito Sota. The weed component was included for the purpose of treating the effects of the nasty drug circulating in Celia. Nothing more, nothing less. The holy water that the Benigoa goddess has provided purifies harmful elements in our bodies so as an alchemist, it made my work easier," I explained.

"…"

"There's no need to make a different medicine. The goddess's holy water does more

than just cure one's body, and the monsters in the Free City of Celia did more than just consume illegal drugs. We can also prove that the fantasy potion is a gift from the goddess, Mr. Ito Sota," I said.

"…"

"How dare you call the goddess's gift a drug? This is blasphemy! Don't you all agree?" I exclaimed, asking everyone.

A few remained quiet, but it didn't take long for the people to start an uproar because Helena, the heresy inquisitor I was close to, yelled.

"It's blasphemy!"

The moment she yelled, the other inquisitors did the same and everyone started yelling.

"It's blasphemy! It's blasphemy!"

"Heresy! Heresy!"

"It's blasphemy!"

I thought maybe heresy was a bit too much, but they were helping me.

'Pffft!'

The trial was so fun that I wanted to laugh and the panicking Ito Sota quickly tried to explain.

"I-I was ignorant for not knowing that the fantasy potion was made out of holy water. If I knew that, I would have never made that statement, Your Honor. Father Basel, you know just how much I believe in the Benigoa goddess, don't you?"

'It's better for him to make excuses like this… '

"Honorable priests, please forgive me for my ignorance and know that I didn't have any other intentions," Ito Sota quickly explained his side.

Father Basel was the religious figure that currently had the highest rank and as the

cardinal, he could hold a religious trial, so it was understandable for Ito Sota to constantly beg in front of him, but unfortunately, Father Basel had long been on my side.

Well, apart from that, Ito Sota's excuse was actually reasonable. His comment about how the fantasy wasn't a drug was denying everything he said so far, so basically, he believed denying his testimony would give him a better chance of survival.

'It's possible.'

If Ito Sota said he didn't know, then there was room to make excuses.

'The problem is… '

This wasn't the end of my preparations. The twist was that Father Basel had actually taken a dose of the *potion* already.

What did he take? It was the precious wine I prepared for him…

'And it was an extra fine brand, too. Hahahahaha.'

The fantasy potion allowed the person to see what they wanted to see and as the pharmacist, I had the privilege of letting them see what they wanted to see, just like when we were in the Cursed Shrine. It was possible for a few religious figures to think that they saw divine revelation after drinking the holy water from the heavens and it also applied to Father Basel, who was a very religious person.

'What kind of illusion do you think I made Father Basel see? Huh? You demon worshiper.'

"As of now, this case is beyond the jurisdiction of the imperial court and under the authority of the Holy Empire's Vatican second cardinal, I officially request Chief Justice James to open a religious trial here." Father Basel announced.

"That's…"

This was a small secret between Father Basel and me.

'Demon worshiper, Ito Sota!'

I hope you liked my heartfelt gift to you, Ito Sota.

CHAPTER 137
THIRD CARD (2)

"As of now, this case is beyond the jurisdiction of the imperial court and under the authority of the Holy Empire's Vatican second cardinal, I officially request Chief Justice James to open a religious trial here." Father Basel announced.

Father Basel looked serious as he made the announcement and Ito Sota must be panicking right now. The fact that he became a desecrator was undeniable, but as he mentioned, this only happened because of his ignorance.

'Dumbass… '

He was ignorant because had no idea the potion contained holy water and he called the fantasy potion a *drug* because he didn't exactly know what it was made of. Considering that it was a mistake, the court could take his circumstances into consideration, but the problem was that Father Basel had the authority to open a religious trial.

Obviously, I didn't meet with the higher-ranked priests just to be friends with them. There was no reason for me to work so hard just to be friends with those people. Of course, being close to them wasn't necessarily a bad thing, but meeting with those priests had been a good opportunity for me.

'A good opportunity for me to bring you down.'

Gifting wine made out of holy water and making him see an illusion wasn't difficult and the wine I gave to Father Basel was an item I made myself. It had the same effect as the cheap fantasy potion, but it was a special brand that couldn't be compared to the potions.

[Sacred Wine - Epic Rank]

[It's a wine made out of holy water known as the gift from god. This wine is a mixture of various complicated ingredients and it permanently increases the player's holy magic when drinking for the first time. It also allows the players to recover their

depleted holy magic. It sometimes shows special effects.]

'There's nothing more I need to say about this.'

I needed about 8,000 gold to make one bottle and even though making it wasn't complicated, the process was a bit difficult. I no longer had to worry about the fantasy potion since it was being made in the alchemy factory in the Blue Guild, but obtaining the necessary ingredients for the Sacred Wine wasn't easy. If Ito Sota wasn't being questioned, it could have been impossible to obtain them; no, it would have been impossible.

After making the Sacred Wine, my task was very simple because I just needed to eat with Father Basel and drink the wine together with him. I worked hard on creating the illusion that Father Basel was going to see after drinking the wine.

'Hahahahaha… '

What he saw was probably going to happen 20 years from now. The illusion showed Ito Sota signing a contract with a demon summoned from hell and the scene I showed Father Basel was the sad story of a man who struggled to protect the Benigoa goddess and the Holy Empire. Naturally, the villain the man was fighting was none other than Ito Sota, the demon worshiper. As the one that signed a contract with the demon the moment he stepped foot on this continent, he walked inside the Vatican slowly and cautiously. The current scene was five years from now and not only did he intrude on the Vatican, but he was also strong enough to defeat the Holy Empire's pope with his own hands. In the illusion, Father Basel was basically our hero and the Vatican's only hope of fighting against Ito Sota.

'This is great.'

The fight between Father Basel and Ito Sota lasted a long time and like any other apocalyptic story, Father Basel lost everyone he loved and experienced a very miserable and painful death. He cried as the Vatican was surrounded by demons from hell and as he watched Ito Sota tearing apart the goddess statues, a sword pierced his heart.

I couldn't forget the face Father Basel made after seeing the illusion. He seemed to question whether the illusion he saw was divine revelation, but the next day, he became confident in his theory and acknowledged that he received the goddess's

will.

'Since he's a religious person… '

He was a different type of regressor and revelator who had seen a glimpse of the future, so to Father Basel, Ito Sota was an enemy he *had* to get rid of right now.

'Just like the time Hyun-Sung saw Jung Jin-Ho for the first time.'

There was no way Ito Sota could escape because this was the last insurance I prepared. I did prepare a few more, but the one I had right now was the best way to bring Ito Sota down.

"Chief Justice James?"

"Understood. I accept Father Basel's official request. As of this moment, this case is no longer under the imperial court's jurisdiction and as the Holy Empire's imperial chief justice, this case shall be closed." He declared.

I saw Ito Sota reveal a shocked and frustrated expression.

"Honorable Father Basel, I understand how you feel, but I-I don't quite understand the current situation. Even if I didn't know the details of the fantasy potion, it had never been my intention to insult the Benigoa goddess. The one who should be getting punished is none other than Lee Ki-Young!" Ito Sota yelled.

"Why should I be the one to receive the punishment, Mr. Ito Sota?" I asked.

"Mixing weed with the goddess' holy water is a disrespectful thing to do," he answered.

The fact that the bastard started talking nonsense was proof that he was in danger.

"How is that being disrespectful? I merely applied a purification process because the goddess' great power can purify anything, even that rude mind of yours." I pointed out.

"Th-That's not all, Father Basel! Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild used the goddess' gift to get an unfair advantage and receive all the benefits for himself!" Ito Sota exclaimed.

“A portion of the fantasy potion profits are being offered to the Vatican, so you don’t have to worry about me getting an unfair advantage and another portion of the profit is going to be used to help the actual drug addicts with their rehab. The item was made with the goddess’ gift so I wouldn’t use it for myself because I’m not a criminal like you, Ito Sota,” I explained.

“How dare you call me a criminal…”

“I mean, you did get caught in the act and if the fantasy potion isn’t a drug, then everything you’ve said so far is a lie. You confessed your own sins, so even if a religious trial isn’t going to be conducted, you would have still been convicted. *Oh,* if you regret the statement you made just now, there’s something I want to ask. Is the fantasy potion a drug or not?” I asked.

“…”

“Our lovely Mr. Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild, please answer my question. Is the fantasy potion a drug or not?” I asked again.

“Your question isn’t worth answering…” he mumbled.

“So?”

“There’s no way the goddess’ gift is a drug, so asking that question is disrespectful to begin with! Chief Justice, Father Basel, this is a trap and I’m being framed. I… I would like to officially request another trial, no, I would like to request for a recess, Your Honor!” Ito Sota shouted.

He desperately called out to them, but of course, they weren’t going to accept his request because this was now a religious trial and Father Basel held the right to decide.

“I no longer have the authority over this case. Defendant, you can request for recess and appeal after the religious trial ends,” the judge remarked.

“Then… Father Basel, I’m being framed and this is the dirty work of Lee Ki-Young of the Blue Guild who’s trying to make me fall for his trap. If you can give me some time, I’ll bring solid evidence to you…” Ito Sota desperately defended himself.

I couldn’t understand why people like him always defended themselves in

desperation by saying that they were being framed, but the way he acted was proof he was *that* desperate. He was telling everyone this was unfair, but of course, everyone only looked at him coldly because he had already lied in his testimony. As such, it was only natural that they wouldn't believe what he was saying now. Actually, I was sure that this attitude of his was making Father Basel even angrier at him. After all, in the future that the Benigoa goddess *showed* him, Ito Sota's specialty was his tongue.

"Silence!" Father Basel yelled.

"Father Basel?"

"Silence, you dirty heretic!" he exclaimed once more.

"I-I'm not a heretic. Father Basel, Sister Helena, I'm sure there's a misunderstanding here, I've never done anything to betray the Benigoa goddess," Ito Sota said desperately.

"Don't lie, you dirty heretic! Do you really think we don't know about your evil intentions?!" Father Basel yelled.

"This is unfair," Ito Sota complained.

"I felt something strange the moment you kept visiting the Vatican," Father Basel said.

"I don't understand what you're saying," Ito Sota said.

"I told you to be quiet, you dirty heretic! Do you really think that I don't know about the fact that you colluded with the demons from hell?!" Father Basel asked, yelling.

"Excuse me?"

"I received a revelation from the goddess that showed you trying to take over the Holy Empire with the demons you signed a contract with the moment you stepped in here," Father Basel answered.

"That's…"

"You dirty demon worshiper!" He interrupted.

“What do you…”

“The goddess told me that you would take over the Holy Empire from the inside little by little and in the end destroy the Vatican and everyone in it!” Father Basel added.

“I-I think there’s a misunderstanding. I have never colluded with any demon. I understand that you’re angry, but…”

“No matter what kind of excuse you give, it doesn’t change the fact you tried to assassinate Lee Ki-Young because you didn’t want his potion made out of holy water to be distributed within Japan,” Father Basel stated, interrupting Ito Sota.

“As I’ve mentioned before, we never tried to assassinate him. The ones that tried to assassinate Lee Ki-Young were the Kage Guild,” Ito Sota explained.

“Are you saying there’s conflict between the guilds?” Father Basel asked.

“Th-That’s not what I meant. The Kage Guild probably tried to assassinate Lee Ki-Young because they didn’t want his potion made out of holy water to be distributed within Japan…”

“Your testimony changed,” Father Basel said, interrupting him again.

“It’s because I was ignorant.”

“You have always been like that. What are the heresy inquisitors doing?! Helena! Helena!” Father Basel called out.

“We’ll make preparations right away,” Helena responded.

“Capture that demon worshiper immediately, then interrogate and judge him! There’s no need for a religious trial! Holding a trial for that heretic is a waste. Also, capture all the dirty group of demons as well as the dirty heretics in the Free City of Celia,” Father Basel ordered.

“Yes, sir!”

“Send the heresy inquisitors as well as the holy knights to Celia immediately and cut down all the dirty demon worshipers!” he added, exclaiming.

I guess Father Basel got a bit excited after recalling what happened in the *past* and of course, I understood his feelings. The person that was going to ruin the Holy Empire in the future was right in front of him, so I was sure that he wanted to get rid of Ito Sota right away.

'I didn't expect there to be a trial… '

Regardless of whether the trial happened or not, it was an undeniable fact that Ito Sota was going to suffer and die, but I wanted to play this game a bit longer. Ito Sota seemed defeated, but I still wanted to see what else he had prepared. He would eventually be ruined because of the insurance I prepared, but it could still be entertaining. Even though the court was in chaos, I saw Ito Sota looking at me.

'You've caught on… '

He seemed to have understood just a little of what was going on, how he ended up here, and why Father Basel was so worked up. He looked like he wanted to say something, but couldn't because logic never worked when it came to religion.

'And I'm sure that bastard knows that as well… '

"Tie that demon worshiper to a stake right now!" Father Basel ordered.

"Kill the heretic!"

"Execute the desecrator this instant!"

Ito Sota was eventually cornered and now, he only had two choices. First, he could accept the heresy inquisitor's interrogation, which was no different from a witch hunt, or resist and run away from this unfair situation. He would have a higher chance of living if he went with the first choice. Of course, he would suffer and would get beaten up pretty badly, but there would still be a sliver of hope. The second choice was a different story, altogether. The moment he resisted, his status as a so-called demon worshiper and heretic would be cemented. The fact that he resisted the Vatican would be proof that he was a demon worshiper.

'What will you do?'

I was really curious to see which one he was going to choose, but unfortunately, the latter seemed to be his only option. Why? Because I saw the holy knights and the

heretic inquisitors chasing after him.

'Bingo.'

CHAPTER 138
THIRD CARD (3)

“Capture the heretic!”

“Execute the demon worshiper immediately!”

Obviously, Ito Sota wasn’t going to let them tie him up; no, even if he didn’t resist from the beginning, it was still going to be difficult for him to turn this case in his favor, so for him, the choice was obvious. The priests here were filled with *that* much madness.

‘Pffft!’

Basically, he had no other choice but to resist.

“Receive judgment, you demon worshiper!”

“Shit!”

It only took a moment for the two people near him to get captured and Ito Sota easily broke the constraint around his wrist. It seemed like from the beginning, they hadn’t tied him up properly and I was certain that a few of the imperial knights were on his side as well.

“Capture… Capture that demon worshiper immediately and execute him!”

“Get him! You heretic! Bring that heretic here immediately! Helena! Bring me his head!”

“Understood.”

The place became chaotic, no, chaotic wasn’t enough to describe the situation. The problem was that those people didn’t have the ability to harm Ito Sota, but they continued to fill the court - it was completely absurd. Ito Sota had to make a decision.

'Fight or run.'

Gandhi, who preached non-violence, would have been forced to wield a sword in this situation to protect himself and in the end, I heard someone from the holy knights screaming. While Ito Sota was trying to block the sword flying toward him, he injured one of the knights.

"*Ahhhhh!*"

"You dirty heretic!"

Lee Ji-Hye glanced at me and quietly mumbled, "Oppa, I think it'll be dangerous if you stay here."

"No, it's not that dangerous so we can just stay here and watch. I think the situation is going to get interesting," I told her.

"*Ohh…* you're right," she said after letting out a soft gasp.

A few people had already left the court and the high-ranked people were being protected in the arms of the imperial knights in case something dangerous happened to them. Father Basel's side was a bit interesting because it seemed like his sense of duty to save the Holy Empire from danger was causing him to act this way.

"Bring him here this instant! Heresy Inquisitor Helena! How dare you act so rudely during a holy religious trial? I'm certain he's a heretic! He's definitely a demon worshiper!" Father Basel yelled.

"Yes, sir!"

"No, I'll go there myself. I'll beat him myself! Bring my mace immediately!" He ordered.

"Father Basel, you shouldn't get involved in this," Helena suggested.

"Capture him right now, then!!" Father Basel yelled.

Father Basel couldn't even walk properly, so seeing him act this way was scarier than funny. As expected, a warrior that had received the goddess's *revelation* was different.

The situation became more serious when Helena got involved.

'She's strong… '

Even though she couldn't be compared to Victor Hart or Cha Hee-Ra, she was strong enough to be the leader of an armed group. If I had to give an example, she was on Lee Sang-Hee and Hwang Jung-Yeon's level.

The way she ran while holding the mace made her look like a holy warrior participating in a holy war. Sister Jessica sprinkled holy power, activated a shield, and buffed the holy knights as they chased after Ito Sota once again.

"*Ahhhh!*"

'It's a great sight.'

Ito Sota was in a situation where he couldn't resist them, but he also couldn't *not* resist them. For now, he was trying to stop the people that were chasing after him but it was difficult to tell how long that would last. I thought he wasn't going to last long, however his agility of 99 points was beyond what I had imagined.

'Still, he probably won't last long… '

Ito Sota ran toward the back after seeing dozens of knights chasing after him and of course, the person in the back was a knight that came to capture him. After pushing away the knight, he blocked the flying sword. Being able to dodge all attacks in this situation was definitely amazing, but when Helena got involved, I noticed Ito Sota frowning. This entire situation was my creation and I couldn't help but laugh because the urgency in his voice was like a catalyst for my laughter.

"Father Basel! I have been framed!" Ito Sota exclaimed.

"Silence! You dirty heretic!" Father Basel yelled.

"It's all a misunderstanding. Please… make them stop!" Ito Sota requested desperately.

"Shut that dirty mouth of yours!"

"Sister Helena, you know better than anyone that I'm not *that* kind of person!" he

pleaded.

“Don’t say my name, you demon worshiper!” Helena retorted.

“Sister Jessica, please say…”

“What are you doing? Are you just going to let that demon worshiper keep talking? Hurry up and silence him!” Jessica ordered.

I felt kind of bad for Ito Sota, but I was able to bring both Helena and Jessica to my side by having a heated discussion about Ito Sota and I didn’t even have to use the Sacred Wine on them.

I was sure Father Basel’s wrath created this situation and even though this exciting match was fun to watch, we needed something new. When I glanced over at Jung Ha-Yan, I noticed her reciting a spell.

“Magic Chain.”

Chain made out of blue-colored mana wrapped around Ito Sota, but the way he destroyed the spell with just a flick of his hand was ridiculous. Jung Ha-Yan seemed a bit disappointed, so I nodded and applauded to encourage her because compliments always made Jung Ha-Yan feel desperate for some reason.

“Wind Blade! Magic Chain! Wind Blow!”

I never imagined that she would cast three spells at once. She was being considerate of the people around Ito Sota so the spells weren’t *that* powerful, but as the main attacker in the Ito Sota raid, it was enough. I felt that I needed to do something as well, but since I couldn’t use my magic here, I thought using Juliena was the best choice.

“Juliena!”

When I called out for her, Juliena moved faster than any of the knights and she was currently moving toward Ito Sota. Since the heretic inquisitors and holy knights were the tanks, it made attacking Ito Sota easy for us damage dealers. Ito Sota himself also wasn’t in a position where he could attack the tanks and it was the same for me. I wasn’t sure whether he was going to attack me or not, but seeing him constantly state that he was innocent made me realize that I was safe. He didn’t want the

conflict to escalate and he believed the madness would end if he continued persuading them.

"*Geez…* this has been going on for a while," I commented.

"You're right."

"I never imagined he was this strong…"

"How about calling for the Mercenary Queen and the shaman?" Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

"No, I don't think that's necessary… since they need to protect the important guests in case something happens. Hee-Ra noona seems like she's enjoying it right now and if something happens, I'm sure she'll step in," I explained.

"He dodged it! Concentrate," she said.

"It's not easy to capture Ito Sota even with Juliena's speed. He's really fast. I wonder if all the guild masters of large guilds are like him," I said.

"I think it would be best to link with Miss Ha-Yan or try finding a different way to capture him. I heard the target gets cursed if Juliena harms them so instead of trying to capture him from the start, how about scratching him little by little? And didn't you say Juliena has the power to curse them herself and can move black tentacles or something?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I can't use that right now. I think I can only use it when Juliena's ego awakens," I replied.

"That's too bad. Another method is attacking mentally, so try talking to the group. If you initiate by commanding the heresy inquisitor and the holy knights, it won't be such a bad idea," she suggested.

Lee Ji-Hye, the strategy team leader gave me a great idea.

"We need to capture that dirty heretic. That heretic is strong because he has the power of the demons in him, so we must work together!" I yelled.

As expected, Ito Sota glared at me, but there was nothing he could do about it.

When I yelled out my command, I saw the group getting into formation. Just a moment, everyone seemed like they were filled with rage, but now, it seemed like they were getting into a basic raid formation.

“Okay! Let’s punish that demon, everyone!”

“Punish the heretic!”

“We can’t let him get away. If we block the doors and continue chasing after him, the dirty demon’s power that he has will disappear little by little, so let’s endure it a little longer, everyone! For the Benigoa goddess!”

Ito Sota was glaring at me and that was when Jung Ha-Yan’s magic landed on his arms. It was simple restraint magic, but Juliena took advantage of that opening and flew past his arm.

“Shit!” Ito Sota yelled.

‘Nice!’

I couldn’t help but make a fist.

If we were outside in an open area, his agility stats would have really helped him, but his movements were limited because we were currently in an enclosed space. There were so many people trying to suppress him so he couldn’t even attack properly and of course, as more time passed, he would start changing his strategy. I didn’t know whether he had finally realized that he had no hope or if he still wanted to tear me apart, but the important thing was that he was resisting with everything he had. During all of this, however, what stood out was his condition.

‘You haven’t fully recovered yet, right?’

The damage he had sustained from Cha Hee-Ra was still there and he had to fight Helena, who had received Sister Jessica’s buff, in that condition. Even Jung Ha-Yan’s magic was playing a big role in all of this.

“We need to punish that heretic, everyone!” I yelled.

“…”

“He’s the cancer of the Holy Empire; no, to the Free City! We need to get rid of people like him completely,” I exclaimed.

“…”

“Let’s work together, everyone!” I yelled once again.

“Sh-Shut up…” Ito Sota retorted.

“We’re almost there!”

“Shut up! Please, please shut up!” Ito Sota desperately cried out.

“The one that should shut up is you, not me, you dirty demon worshiper! The Benigoa goddess will punish you!” I roared at him.

“You… you bastard!” he yelled.

“It’s god’s punishment, you dirty heretic! Goddess of Benigoa, please give us strength!” I said.

He wasn’t approaching me, but that wasn’t the only thing. Not only was he noticeably anxious, but he was answering my words that he had intentionally ignored previously by cursing at me. He looked mad, but it wasn’t simply anger. It must be the curse Juliena had afflicted on him so I thought that provoking him a bit more would be a good idea.

“This is the power of the goddess!”

“Shit, shit!”

“Thanks to you all, the dirty demon’s power is starting to go away. I know it’s hard but endure it a bit longer. Let’s push a little more!” I said, encouraging the group.

“You… you weaklings! You’re all shit!” Ito Sota yelled.

“The demon is showing its true colors!” I pointed out, yelling.

“Shut up!”

“You’re finally showing your true colors, you dirty demon’s puppet!” I screamed.

As small scratches appeared more and more on his body, the way he raged was a sight to see. I couldn’t help but that Juliena and I were in sync.

In the end, he couldn’t contain his anger anymore as he looked at me.

‘Oh.’

Explosive magic started extending in all directions. He must have thought convincing Father Basel was no longer going to work, so he decided to do things his *way.* Actually, maybe he still couldn’t understand the situation because of the curse, but no one knew the truth. It could just be revenge toward me or he could have thought that making the holy knights unable to fight was the priority. But there was one thing I was sure of…

‘He’s really strong.’

He was stronger than I thought.

I heard screams all over the place and even though it was hard to see him from the beginning, the holy knights and the heresy inquisitors immediately moved back to the point that it was absurd. If Ito Sota had been wielding a sword, their limbs would have been cut off. Despite that, the court was filled with holy magic and even though it was helping the main force, I thought the only thing they could do was limit Ito Sota’s movement. Fortunately, the holy knights and the heresy inquisitors weren’t weak. They were considered the most powerful armed group in the Holy Empire and including Helena and Jessica—the few people here had exceptional stats. As such, I couldn’t understand how Ito Sota was able to endure it for this long.

‘He hasn’t even fully recovered yet and is without his gear. Is this for real?’

I finally understood why the Holy Empire treated people with this much power with respect. I felt it last time with Cha Hee-Ra, but there was a reason why they called others “below standard” other than these types of people.

“Get him! *Ahhhh!*”

“Don’t let him move! Surround him!”

“Sister Helena!”

“Don’t make room for him!”

“Everyone, please hang on just a little longer!”

Despite me giving them commands, they kept making room for Ito Sota and when I put down my guard for a moment, I saw Ito Sota charging toward me in a blur.

‘Ah!’

I was surprised, but I wasn’t in a panic because he still had to go through many obstacles to reach me. Before he could get close to me, Cha Hee-Ra quickly intercepted and kicked his side.

Boom!

As Ito Sota screamed, he slammed into the opposite wall. He managed to break through the first hurdle, but not the second one.

“*Ack!*”

“Capture him immediately!”

“*Cough*. Let me go! Let go! I’ll kill you all! *Ahhhh*… kill! I’ll kill you with my own hands. No matter what, Lee Ki-Young! Lee Ki-Young! Let go of me! *Cough!*” Ito Sota screamed.

“Tie his arms and legs!”

“Let go of me. *Argh!* I’ll kill anyone that gets close to me!” Ito Sota threatened.

Even though this wasn’t within my plans, the curse’s influence made him seem like he was really drunk on the demon’s power. He was spitting out blood after Hee-Ra noona kicked him and that sight really made him look like the demons’ comrade. This was a suitable ending for a person like him, who liked to pretend he was noble.

“*Whoo*… I feel relieved,” Cha Hee-Ra said after letting out a sigh.

I couldn’t help but nod in agreement.

CHAPTER 139
VERDICT (1)

It felt as if I had been relieved from the indigestion I had for over 10 years. Seeing Ito Sota being surrounded by the heresy inquisitors made me happy because it was as if I was getting rewarded for my hard work. Obviously, the person that looked happier than me was Father Basel, the one who received the goddess's *revelation.* There was a faint smile on his face and he probably thought that he had achieved his mission of changing the depressing future he had seen.

"Good job! Nice one!"

Of course, this wasn't the end…

"No, it's too early to celebrate! I need to deploy the holy knights and the heresy inquisitors to the Free City of Celia. Sister Jessica, lead the deployment of the holy knights," Father Basel ordered.

"Yes, sir," she answered.

"It's a holy war," he commented.

I had mentioned this before, but what Father Basel wanted wasn't simply Ito Sota's death. What he really wanted was to search for the demons in the free city and get rid of them all. Naturally, I thought it would be best to participate in this big event, so when I glanced at Kasugano Yuno, she nodded as if he knew what I wanted.

"Father Basel, if it's alright with you, would it be okay if the Yozora Guild participated as well?" she asked.

"*Oh!*"

"We don't know when the demon's informants will escape from the Free City of Celia, so I'm sure the guild will be helpful at a time like this," Yuno explained.

"*Oh…* thank you, Miss Kasugano Yuno. We appreciate your help. The goddess won't

forget your contribution to this," Father Basel said.

If I was the guild master, I would have volunteered with the entire Blue Guild, but our Hyun-Sung and Deok-Gu had a lot of work to do. I had no idea about Kim Hyun-Sung, but the kind-hearted Park Deok-Gu might have a difficult time.

"The Black Swan Guild will also help," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"The Red Mercenary Guild, too. Of course, we'll need the Yozora Guild's permission since it's a free city, but if it's alright with you, I'd like to send some of my men," Cha Hee-Ra offered.

"Of course, I accept everyone's wishes," Yuno said, nodding.

'Nice!'

It was only right for the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild to participate because it was getting to the point where a large guild was about to disappear. Considering the resources, items, and gold the Yamato Guild had saved up all this time, I was sure that they would have plenty to split between them. Naturally, I would get a portion since I had contributed the most in all of this and the majority of Kasugano Yuno's portion would be handed over to me as well. Lee Ji-Hye owed me her potion as well as the Red Mercenary Guild. Many of the businesses that the Blue Guild was involved in had been put on hold due to financial reasons, but if I added the gold I got from the fantasy potion as well as the Yamato Guild, we would still have a lot of gold remaining even if a few of our businesses went bankrupt.

"The Holy Empire's future is bright thanks to all of you," Father Basel remarked.

"We're only doing what's right, Father Basel. This is the chance for us to get rid of all the cancerous heretics that are in the Holy Empire. We're happy that we can offer our help."

"*Hahaha*."

"I'll send a message to the Yozora Guild," Yuno said.

"Thank you very much. Even though this isn't the time to relax, I was able to calm down a bit thanks to all of you. *Whew*…" Father Basel sighed.

It was time for me to make a move. Ito Sota was no longer in my sight since he was being taken care of by the heresy inquisitors while yelling and screaming. I wanted to talk to him at least once, but this was more important.

'I have to get my rewards.'

Calculating the rewards I was going to receive was more important than being happy about my achievements.

When I started walking quietly, people naturally turned their attention to me. Father Basel was especially happy to see me.

"*Oh,* Brother Lee Ki-Young!"

"You seem happy, Father Basel," I commented.

"*Ahem*… *ahem*…"

"You didn't look so good in the past few days, but seeing you happy like this makes me feel a bit relieved," I told him.

"There's still a lot that needs to be done, but we've taken care of the biggest problem and it's all thanks to you, Brother Lee Ki-Young. *Hahaha*," Father Basel said, complimenting me.

"*Haha*. All I did was move according to the goddess's will because all of this is the Benigoa goddess's will. It would've been nice if the Blue Guild could participate in the holy war, but we're currently busy with other things, so I apologize for that," I told him.

"It's fine, no need to apologize. You've played a big part in this case, Brother Lee Ki-Young. If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have been able to track down those demons. *Hahaha.*" Father Basel pointed out.

I did contribute a lot to this because not only did I use the fantasy potion to cure the city that could have been tainted by the *demons,* but I also revealed Ito Sota's true colors. I also gifted the goddess's *revelation* to Father Basel using the Sacred Wine and provided solid evidence in this case. If I were to exaggerate a bit, I had designed every part of this situation.

“I’m embarrassed,” I said, shyly.

“Don’t be. You deserve the compliment. Also, didn’t the Blue Guild’s power decrease because of the Yamato Guild? We should take care of the internal affairs first because I know you better than anyone, Brother Lee Ki-Young.” Father Basel suggested.

Compliments weren't the only thing I wanted. I wanted to ask for a reward, but when I smiled brightly, I heard Father Basel talking. “The Vatican will give you a reward.”

“I see…”

“No, not just the Vatican. Since you’ve done great things for the Holy Empire, I’m sure you’ll receive a reward from the castle as well, so I think it’ll be best if you told everyone else. By the way, if there’s something you want, please let me know.” Father Basel added.

“I didn’t do this because I wanted to get a reward, Father Basel,” I told him.

“*Hahaha*. Do you really think I don’t know what you’re thinking, Brother Lee Ki-Young? But it’s best to receive a reward for what you had done. That will make me feel better as well.”

“I see…”

“Thank you for your help, Brother Lee Ki-Young,” he said, thanking me.

‘Great.’

The situation was beautiful and if a cardinal himself was complimenting me, I had an idea as to the kind of reward I was going to get. It was difficult to say exactly what it was but maybe…

‘A ministerial treatment?’

I was sure that was the kind of reward I was going to receive. I wouldn’t know for sure until I receive it, but I would at least receive the same treatment a guild master of a large guild would receive. I had no idea what kind of treatment the guild masters received, but I could receive a griffon and my own room within the castle. Of course, I also couldn’t deny the fact that I may receive other rewards along with it.

'Sweet… '

It was worth putting my life on the line and despite just standing here, I couldn't help but smile. When I glanced over at Ito Sota, I noticed Helena and the others tying him up. My surroundings became loud. I noticed people clearing out the court because a fight suddenly broke out and the holy knights were busy running around trying to capture the Yamato guild members that were within the castle. Even though I didn't have anything to do, I thought it would be best to pretend to look busy.

"Let go of me! I've done nothing wrong! Let go! *Cough, cough!*" Ito Sota yelled.

"You dirty demon worshiper. I'll muzzle you if you keep talking," Helena warned.

"Shit… shit!" he cursed.

During all of this, I could still hear Ito Sota's voice and he looked pitiful. He didn't seem like the same powerful guild master who was omnipotent and loved by everyone. Not only was he covered in blood, but he was also coughing out blood because Cha Hee-Ra's kick must have destroyed his organs. The reason why he was still alive was that the priests were using their holy magic on him to prevent him from dying. I was sure that he must have realized by now that he had fallen for my trap and I noticed how confused and angry he was. What was the problem? Where did it all start? I was certain that these were the types of questions he had in mind, but he couldn't find the answer because he had been in a position where he looked down on everything. Basically, he and I had the same nature.

'Cautious strategist.'

Even though Mind's Eye didn't explain the details about one's nature, I had seen a lot of different people, so I somewhat understood their personalities and nature, or at least the things I couldn't judge just simply by the name of their nature. Categorizing humans into one nature was dangerous, but for me, I was able to make assumptions based on the nature I could see through Mind's Eye. For example, Lee Ji-Hye's nature was selfish and ambitious, so her desire to have power was strong. She was greedy and would do anything to achieve her goal, but the nature displayed on her status window didn't make her seem like such a conceited person. If she was perfectly hiding her true self, I could be wrong, but Lee Ji-Hye's selfish and ambitious nature didn't represent her.

'It's the same for Ito Sota and me.'

Our nature was cautious strategist. We enjoyed planning from behind and presented different variables before setting the plan in motion. For me, I always think of the worst situation first and I wasn't sure whether Ito Sota did the same, but it was likely that he was doing the same. Of course, he and I were still different. Player Ito Sota didn't like getting involved himself while I didn't like gambling, but the difference between him and me was whether we were going to throw the dice or not. If I were him, I would have let myself get hurt during the Juliena case instead of that guild member who tried to kill me. I would have moved a bit more aggressively without caring about my reputation or the people around me. Ito Sota's first mistake was not being able to give up all these because he wanted to maintain his image and he could also make the others clean up the mess for him. However, out of the many choices he had, he boldly ignored the choices he considered gambling because to him, safety and reputation were the most important. The difference between him and me was obvious.

'I'm desperate.'

Compared to him who had a lot of things, I didn't have any choice. I didn't have a lot of people who pledged their loyalty to me and I wasn't strong like him. Unlike me who had to take risks every time, Ito Sota never took any risks in this fight.

'That's the difference between you and me.'

That was why he was screaming while covered in blood and why I was able to look down at him. I didn't have any other emotions. When I started walking with Father Basel, I noticed him struggling while being completely tied up.

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you! I'll never forgive… *cough, cough*!" Ito Sota yelled.

I ignored his bullshit and when I spoke quietly, I heard an answer.

"I think his mind has been tainted by the demon as well, Father Basel."

"Yes, I'm certain his entire body has been tainted," Father Basel answered.

"What's going to happen to him?" I asked.

"He'll be executed immediately," Father Basel answered.

“Right now?” I asked.

“Yes, right now. We’ll have to think of a proper way to execute him, but I’m sure there’s a punishment suitable for demon worshipers,” he explained.

I immediately came up with a punishment. I wasn’t sure whether it was suitable for Ito Sota, but it was a new type of punishment. When I spoke quietly, I noticed Father Basel’s happy face.

“How about drowning him in holy water?”

“*Oh ho*…”

“As the person who disrespectfully called the goddess’s holy water a *drug,* I think this punishment is the most suitable for him,” I explained.

CHAPTER 140
VERDICT (2)

"As the person that disrespectfully called the goddess' holy water a *drug,* I think this punishment is the most suitable for him," I explained.

"*Oh ho…*"

"It'll be a purification ritual since his entire body has been tainted by the demons," I added.

"I think that's a great idea, yes! If we execute him as is, the demon in his body could taint the energy within the castle. I think that's good, yes! That's the best way! As expected from Brother Lee Ki-Young," Father Basel complimented me.

His reaction was great considering I said it without much thought. When I recalled the fact that one of the punishments the witches had suffered during the Middle Ages was having a rock tied to their ankles before they were thrown into the water, I thought it would be a similar punishment, but that didn't seem like the case. I was sure they had their own methods since Father Basel looked happy.

'Hm, not bad.'

Ito Sota's case was different from Lee Seol-Ho. Even though Ito Sota had been cornered, no one knew what kind of trouble he would cause, so it was better to take care of him while we had the chance. Basically, there wasn't a need to wait for an execution day or keep an eye on him because Father Basel was more impatient than me.

'He saw and experienced it himself, after all… '

I could understand why he couldn't wait any longer; he must have recalled the future he saw.

"Wh-What…"

Obviously, Ito Sota was really starting to panic and it was as if the scene where he glared and cursed at me just now didn't actually happen. He was starting to understand what was going to happen to him.

'Idiot.'

Even though he was influenced by the curse, he should have begged for forgiveness but instead, he was making a fuss and in some ways, he showed that his pride wasn't doing him any good. His face turned pale when Father Basel yelled.

"Bring the bronze statue immediately!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Bring an empty bronze statue! It'll be filled with holy water!" he ordered.

"We have received your order."

His driving force was really fast. I wasn't sure what he did in the past, but as the one who received the goddess's revelation, I thought Father Basel had made the right decision. I thought he cared about maintaining his grace and dignity, but he had a fiery spirit and I wasn't going to blame him for that. His nature helped me in a positive way, after all.

"Inquisitors, make that demon worshiper stand up," Father Basel ordered.

"Yes, sir!"

"We'll quickly proceed with the judgment; no, this isn't even a judgment. Is it even worth asking the demon worshiper about their sins? This will be a simple execution," he ruthlessly stated.

"Shit… shit!" Ito Sota started to curse once again.

"Even if you regret the sins you have committed, it's already too late, demon worshiper. I want the holy knights to clean up this place," he told them.

"Understood."

"We need to make room before the statue arrives, so over there! Everyone here will

observe the execution and become the goddess's eyes and lips as they watch the execution of the wicked who had committed a crime and betrayed god." Father Basel announced.

The more I watched him, the more I liked him. It was a coincidence that I chose Father Basel, but people like him who would do whatever it took to reach their goals had always been useful. If Father Basel moved up in rank, I would be able to wield absolute power since I was close to him.

'I should treat him well… '

I thought that it would be good to give him a few more of those Sacred Wine.

Moments later, the court turned into an execution ground and what caught my attention the most was the large statue. It was a male statue with large wings and I knew exactly who it was. After all, to become close to the religious figures, I had to somewhat study theology.

'Raquel.'

He was an angel and the right hand of the Benigoa goddess. I wasn't sure whether dying inside a statue like that was a good thing or a bad thing, but the statue was beautiful and it was big enough to fit two men. I wasn't sure what the statue was used for previously, but seeing how it had a door behind it, I assumed it was a torturing device. But it could have been used for storing things, but how it had been used before didn't really matter to me. What was more important were the priests pouring holy water inside it and it was as if they had done this before because the way they poured the water made them look *holy.* Of course, it didn't look that way for Ito Sota.

"Crazy… you're all crazy! You savages! *Cough…"* Ito Sota yelled.

"…"

"Lady Marilyn! Lady Caitlyn! *Cough!* Are you just going to watch them do something crazy like this? Chief Justice James! An execution *cough* inside the holy court? Are you out of your mind? Kasugano Yuno! Are you betraying your country?!" he screamed.

"That's nonsense. We're not on Earth, Mr. Ito Sota. We're the people of the empire

affiliated with the Free City of Lindel and Celia and if you have committed a grave crime, you should be punished for it. This society is all about fairness and that includes punishments for the sins you have committed as well," I explained.

"Lee Ki-Young, you… *cough*…"

"Why did you do it? Why did you collude with the demons?" I asked.

"It's not true, I didn't do it. You're the one responsible for all of this…" he said.

"People might misunderstand what you're saying, Mr. Ito Sota. You did this from the start and this is the result of the wrong choices you have made. You shouldn't have betrayed the goddess," I told him.

It was more like he shouldn't have made me his enemy and I was sure that he understood what I meant.

"The Benigoa goddess doesn't forgive sinners and only shows mercy to the followers that serve her," I added.

"You… you!"

"She doesn't forgive those that oppose her."

"*Cough*… you…"

"You've come too far to repent, Mr Ito Sota. I won't lie to you and say that you'll go to a good place. Since you have committed a lot of sins, it'll be impossible for you to go to heaven. I just hope that you won't make bad choices in your next life," I explained.

I quietly raised the corner of my lips. I was worried about the others looking at me, but I wanted to pay him back for what he had put me through in front of Kasugano Yuno's room. I was sure that he never imagined he would land here the moment he tricked me.

"*Pffft*."

Just like how he laughed, I laughed quietly. My heart broke at the sight of him being tied up, but this was the best ending for a villain. I guess Father Basel felt the same way too because he spoke solemnly.

“Cover his mouth so that he won’t be able to use that sly tongue of his.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You savages! Let go of me! I told you to let go!” Ito Sota shouted as he struggled.

Even though he was resisting, there wasn’t anything he could do and in the end, he looked around while being gagged. I was certain that he was cursing us, though.

“*Mmm! Mmm!*”

Obviously, Father Basel didn’t get swayed by him and he actually spoke quietly while expressing his anger.

“Verdict! Guild master Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild, the mastermind behind the Lindel terrorist attack has not only harmed the citizens of the Free City of Lindel, but he has also killed dozens of people to fulfill his greed. Not only that, but he even committed an outrageous crime within the castle and threatened to assassinate the Holy Empire’s guest. He’s a sinner for breaking the imperial pact to minimize conflict.” Father Basel declared.

“…”

“However…”

“…”

“The reasons stated earlier aren’t the reason for Ito Sota’s execution. The reason for his execution is his collusion with the demons, his plan to take over the Holy Empire, his distribution of illegal drugs within the Free City of Celia, and the terrible crimes of slave trade and organ trafficking. He has also insulted the Benigoa goddess’s holy water within the holy court and even betrayed the goddess with false testimonies.” Father Basel continued.

“…”

“He disobeyed the heresy inquisitor’s interrogation, which is proof that he’s a demon worshiper, so the sinner Ito Sota…”

“…”

"…Will be executed!" Father Basel ordered.

As soon as he was done talking, people started applauding because it was the right verdict.

Ito Sota was being moved to the statue while tied up and even though he was struggling, there was only so much he could do. He wriggled his body to prevent being placed in the statue, but in the end, he was pushed inside it.

"*Mmm! Mmm!*"

I heard splashing as the door closed. I heard him kicking the walls a few times, but soon enough, it started to get quiet. I wonder what he was thinking in there. Was he regretting what he had done or did he feel wronged? I decided not to think about it because I simply took revenge on him for trying to kill me—no more, no less.

Boom!

Even though I couldn't watch until the end, this wasn't such a bad ending.

Boom!

This was enough…

Boom!

'He had been a pretty good villain though… '

I somewhat liked him.

Moments later, the banging sound from inside the statue disappeared and unlike his flashy life, his ending was pitiful.

After saying goodbye to the people around me, I started walking away.

Good job. Thank you for your hard work. Justice won. You would be blessed by the goddess. These were the types of conversations we had. A few prayed while others discussed Ito Sota's evil deeds.

I guess Lee Ji-Hye and Cha Hee-Ra had work to take care of. Since today wasn't our

last day, I could always talk to them next time. When I lightly grabbed Jung Ha-Yan's hand and exited the chaotic place, I heard a voice beside me. I was surprised to see the person who spoke, but their news was good news for me.

"I heard the castle is going to give you a griffon."

"Is that so? That's good news," I said.

"That's right, young man. Not only that, but just as Father Basel explained, you'll be receiving several rewards. You'll be receiving tens of thousands of gold coins and items. The castle will provide your own room, give you access to all the luxuries here and they may even give you a title… It has basically been confirmed that the Vatican is going to give you a position," Victor Hart explained.

"That's great."

"Are you happy? Actually, are you satisfied?" he asked.

"Of course. I'm sure it's not bad news to you either, Mr. Victor Hart. Everything was taken care of before war broke out between Celia and Lindel." I pointed out.

"War isn't the problem. It's the death of an innocent person…"

"Mr. Victor Hart. The members of the Yamato Guild aren't innocent. Ito Sota is a criminal that committed a crime, insulted the goddess' gift, and even worshiped demons. The members of the Yamato Guild are just like him because they are all serving him. Please be careful about what you say," I told him.

"…"

"I'll say this again, but if I yielded, then I wouldn't be here right now," I added when I noticed him getting silent.

"I completely understand what you're saying and I'm sure there's something I don't know, but your method was too much," he remarked.

"No, you don't understand me, Mr. Victor Hart. If you think the opponent is the enemy, then you shouldn't show mercy. Mercy is a feeling that the strong can have for the weak, not the other way around," I explained.

“Who would consider you as a weakling? You’re not a weakling,” he said.

“That’s how I feel and I’m sure you’ll never understand me, Mr. Victor Hart.”

“I agree. I don’t think… I don’t think I can ever come to like you,” he confessed.

“But I’m sure we’ll get along,” I said with a smile.

I saw Victor Hart nodding ever so slowly. Overall, it wasn’t a bad reaction.

“How about it? Would you like to have a drink with me? I have a really great bottle of wine,” I offered.

“No thanks,” he declined.

“I’ll visit you soon,” I told him.

I watched as Victor Hart started walking away. I was worried that he was going to become hostile toward me, but it didn’t seem likely. I was a figure that even the emperor couldn’t throw away, so Victor Hart had no choice but to get along with me. But for some reason, the old man’s eyes made me feel frustrated…

“Ha-Yan,” I called out.

“Yes?”

“Want to drink wine together?” I asked.

“Y-Yes!” she answered excitedly.

I didn’t care about small things like that because today was a good day. When I looked back, I saw the statue sitting quietly in the same spot.

‘Thanks for everything, you bastard.’

CHAPTER 141
HOME (1)

Today wasn't any different from any other day and it was the same for the others as well. Since a large guild in Celia disappeared instantaneously, I was sure everyone was talking about it. The Lindel Daily Report had even covered that story recently and no matter which pub I went over, Everyone would surely be talking about the Yamato Guild and Ito Sota. On the day that Ito Sota died, all the Yamato guild members were executed the same day. Yozora, Black Swan, Red Mercenary Guild, and the soldiers of the Vatican charged into the guild and the citizens of Celia had no choice but to watch the guild go down. Of course, not everyone died. The people they thought weren't involved in all of this were excluded, but it was only a handful of people. The majority of the people who had power or were close to Ito Sota were executed, so they basically ended up dying pitifully only because they sided with the wrong person.

'Tsk... '

Since I wasn't there, I only managed to read a report about what happened to the Yamato Guild and even though I didn't know the details, it still benefited me. Cha Hee-Ra regained the pride she lost during the Lindel terrorist attack and I was able to make a good impression on the Vatican. Officially forming an alliance with the Yozora Guild was also a huge benefit and the alliance between the Black Swan, Red Mercenary, Yozora, and the Blue Guild created a large sensation within the Holy Empire.

'I think they said this was the first time... '

The free cities talked and traded from time to time, but this was the first time they created an alliance this close. This was only possible because they had set an example by sharing with one another and naturally, this wasn't the only thing that caused the massive sensation.

"Th-Then does that mean you're going to be a priest, oppa?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Probably," I answered.

Out of the free citizens, I was the first to receive a position from the Vatican.

'It's beautiful… '

When considering Father Basel's influence, I thought it was possible, but it was of a higher position than I thought. My position was honorary bishop, which was on the same level as an archbishop, and it was honestly too much for me. If I were to compare it to the castle's position, I basically had the same influence as a count. I would be treated well no matter which shrine I go to and out of the few gods that existed here, I actually became Benigoa goddess's honorary bishop. When I imagined being called by that title, I felt wonderful.

When I looked forward after having different thoughts, I noticed Jung Ha-Yan's pale face as if she was feeling anxious. I had an idea as to what she was worried about, so it would be better to clarify before it became a bigger problem.

"You don't have to worry. It's just a title… I don't have any responsibilities. I'll just have the power. I don't have to attend prayers and I don't have to visit the Vatican either."

"I see…" she mumbled

"Of course, I can marry and date, too" I *specifically* pointed out.

"*Ooohhh!*" she exclaimed.

I knew she was worried about that because that was the most important to her. Unlike the priests in the free cities, the priests serving the Benigoa goddess weren't allowed to get married, but as an honorary bishop who was also a free city citizen, their rules didn't exactly apply to me.

"There is a condition of distributing the Sacred Wine on a regular basis, but there are no restrictions on me personally. We're also not distributing it for free and it's also good for us since we can make money," I explained.

"Y-You're right." Jung Ha-Yan nodded.

"Having a close relationship with the shrine is a good thing, especially in the Holy Empire…"

“What’s good about it?” she asked, interrupting me.

“There’s a lot of things. First of all, it’s the treatment you get,” I said.

“*Oh.*”

“The archbishop of the Vatican may only be a title, but it’s within the top four ranks. There’s the pope, cardinal, patriarch, and archbishop. You understand that much, right? Of course, there are roles like the heresy inquisitor and the holy knight, but the armed groups within the Vatican are always beneath them,” I told her.

“I see…”

“Yeah. The title I earned is basically on the same level as the archbishop,” I added.

“That’s pretty high, *hehe*,” she commented, smiling.

I was getting a lot of privileges, but what I liked most about the role was that I could control the heresy inquisitors as well as the holy knights. Basically, if I ran into a problem, I could use them whenever I wanted, and naturally, I couldn’t take them to dungeons or use them for personal conflicts, but that was better than nothing. Receiving help from the Vatican’s armed forces whenever I was in trouble would be very beneficial to me.

‘If I end up being a cardinal… ’

The three templars within the Vatican would respond whenever I was in danger. Even though I had never seen them before, they were monsters that the Vatican was proud of and they were either as strong or stronger than Cha Hee-Ra and Victor Hart.

‘It may not be enough, though.’

Since I was still a citizen of the free city, it may be impossible for me to go up to the cardinal level, but life was full of unexpected things. I may even earn the same position as an archbishop. If I work hard for about five years, there could be a vacant spot and I may have a chance to take it. In the end, this was more beneficial than being a noble within the castle that only looked fancy on the outside. The real nobles were on the pope’s side, not the emperor’s side, but that didn’t mean I was going to reject the emperor’s side. I thought the person that could take care of both sides

would be able to win the game.

'Since I received a lot from them, too… '

Just as Victor Hart said, the castle gave me a griffon and unlike Cha Hee-Ra's griffon, mine was white. It felt like they were being considerate of my position as the honorary bishop because white represented religion.

When I glanced to the side, the griffon's size was so questionable that I didn't think it could be considered an adult. It was smaller than Cha Hee-Ra's griffon, but it had no problems with flying. I felt proud because the satisfaction I felt was the same as owning an expensive imported car.

'Nice… '

Who knew I would get a griffon when I came here? And not only that…

'I got two.'

It was more like I took the other one rather than getting it as a gift. It was Ito Sota's griffon.

'I worked hard on bringing it here.'

Ito Sota was wealthy, but the griffon was what I wanted the most. I didn't just claim it as mine, but when I told people that I wanted it and acted cute around Cha Hee-Ra, the griffon naturally became mine. It was obvious why I brought it here.

'I'm going to give it to Hyun-Sung.'

It was the best present for our regressor who was working hard on his own even now. The black, bulky griffon was definitely a male and since my griffon was a female, they could maybe create a family. In five years, we might be able to mass produce them. I heard that theoretically, it was impossible, but it was worth a try. Just the thought of it made me happy.

"*Oh,* oppa, Father Basel is here," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"Okay, thanks."

Seeing him visit me before I left showed that he really did like me. Despite us talking all night, I was thankful that he showed up here, and not only that, but the others were here as well. Lady Caitlyn, Lady Marilyn, Lady Elise, Sister Jessica, Sister Helena, and the others were here. Father Basel spoke up first and obviously, he looked disappointed.

"I see you haven't left yet, Brother Lee Ki-Young."

"*Hahaha*, it's because the Mercenary Queen isn't here yet," I told him.

"I see…" he said.

"Honestly, I was waiting for you to see me off, Father Basel," I said, shyly.

"*Hahaha*, you're always so cheeky, Brother Lee Ki-Young, *haha*," Father Basel said before letting out a boisterous laugh.

"I'm just thankful that you came here so early in the morning to see me off."

"Of course, I should see you off since you're leaving. I'm worried that you overstayed because of this old man," he said, worried.

"No, I really enjoyed my time here. I'll come to visit you soon, Father Basel."

The way he held my hand tightly was a nice sight. If this old man became the pope, I may become the cardinal and that thought caused me to grab his hand tightly as well. Of course, Father Basel wasn't the only person disappointed by my departure.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young."

"Lady Caitlyn."

"I feel bad that you came at the worst time and you couldn't even enjoy the social gathering properly…" she mumbled.

"It's fine. I was a bit busy before coming here, but I had fun in the past few days. I enjoyed talking to the people you introduced me to and it feels like I've met everyone that I had to meet in my lifetime. It's all thanks to you, Lady Caitlyn," I said, thanking her.

I noticed Lady Marilyn crying on the side for no reason.

'What's wrong with her?'

For some reason, she reminded me of Kasugano Yuno a few days ago. Before leaving for Celia first, she started crying a lot. I managed to calm her down by telling her that I would visit her every month, but it had been really difficult to calm her down. I understood how she felt because we were going to separate. In addition, I couldn't take her with me to Lindel because she had work in Celia.

"Heuuuuk… heuk…"

"Lady Marilyn must be really sad, *haha*," Lady Caitlyn chuckled, trying to lighten the atmosphere.

"M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young! Pl-Please visit us again. *Heuk*…" Lady Marilyn mumbled amidst her sobbing.

"I will, Lady Marilyn. I'll definitely visit. I'll come whenever I have time, so you don't have to be so sad and I hope you see you again too, Lady Elise," I said, turning to Lady Elise.

"Sure," Lady Elise answered.

"I'll visit you as well, Sister Jessica and Sister Helena," I told them.

"It's an honor."

There were others besides them, so saying goodbye to all of them was a lot of work. Although I mainly focused on the high-ranked people, there were a lot of important people as well. There were nobles with good distribution networks and knights with good potential and promising futures. The problem was that each and every one of them was important and I had just realized how difficult it was to manage my own connections. I felt popular for a moment, but…

'It's kind of exhausting.'

Of course, I couldn't show it.

"If this is your first time riding a griffon, I can call for a knight from the Vatican."

"*Hahaha*, I appreciate the offer, but I'll be fine, Father Basel. I flew on one a few times and it wasn't that bad. I'm sure the goddess has been helping me with my journeys," I told him.

"You're worthy of the goddess's help, Brother Lee Ki-Young," Father Basel remarked.

"You're embarrassing me, Father Basel," I said, shyly.

When I was starting to get bored, Cha Hee-Ra and Victor Hart landed on the griffon landing area and they were also saying goodbye to the people around. After glancing at me, I raised the corner of my lips.

"Let's go, darling," Cha Hee-Ra said.

"Okay, noona. Thank you everyone for coming," I nodded to Cha Hee-Ra before turning around to look at the others.

"You can visit the Vatican anytime, Brother Lee Ki-Young," Father Basel told me.

"*Hahaha*, thank you for everything," I told him.

When I got on the griffon's back, Jung Ha-Yan sat behind me. Cha Hee-Ra got on her own griffon and one of the Red Mercenary Guild members rode on Ito Sota's griffon. I guess they were going to be the chauffeur. When I nodded lightly, the griffon started to slowly flap its wings.

'I'm going home.'

When my surroundings changed, the place I considered home changed as well. It was a bit unfortunate, but the change wasn't that bad. For some reason, I missed my family back home. Actually, I was more curious about how our regressor was going to react once he saw the various rewards I received.

'Hyun-Sung, your hyung is coming home!'

CHAPTER 142
HOME (2)

Home was a great place and even though I had fun after resolving the issue at the castle, I couldn't deny the fact that my room and home were more comfortable than that place.

'Oh… '

Of course, I was afraid of the stress I was going to get from my work, but I thought that they had somewhat taken care of everything. I couldn't help but smile after thinking that team leader Kim Mi-Young, the competent Park Joong-Ki of the administrative team, and Hwang Jung-Yeon who had a crush on Park Deok-Gu were working hard. Naturally, I was curious as to how everyone was doing, including Kim Hyun-Sung, Park Deok-Gu, Sun Hee-Young and the kid, Kim Ye-Ri. The people in our party were the first ones I thought of. I had always been thinking of them, but I guess I was more fond of them than I thought and it wouldn't be so bad to go out together as a group in the future.

'Maybe we should go to a dungeon.'

Maybe going to Celia together wouldn't be so bad either. I wasn't sure if we were going to have the time, but taking a break once in a while was a good thing.

I named my white griffon, Whitefall. There was no particular reason why I gave it such a name. I simply thought Whitefall was a decent name since it was white. Riding on the griffon's back was still uncomfortable for me, but I felt better when I noticed it being considerate of me. After passing over a small mountain, I saw the Free City of Lindel and the small city became bigger as we got closer to our destination.

'We're here.'

We returned to Lindel. We arrived at the Red Mercenary Guild's landing area because the Blue Guild didn't have a griffon landing area just yet. Jung Ha-Yan got off the griffon with a disappointed look and I patted Whitefall's head.

"*Coo*."

It was definitely cute.

"I can leave it here, right noona?" I asked Cha Hee-Ra.

"Of course…"

"I'll leave the other griffon here, too. Our guild doesn't have an area where we can take care of them just yet," I explained.

"It's not a big problem, darling. More than that, how about spending the night here?" She suggested.

"It's fine. I need to head to the guild first," I said, declining her offer.

"Really? That's unfortunate," she replied.

"I'll visit tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Since… we have a lot to talk about," I said.

She seemed a bit disappointed, but I didn't think much about it. Even though Cha Hee-Ra expressed her disappointment, she had work to do as well since she left the guild for a while, after all.

Jung Ha-Yan and I left the guild. It could be considered a short time for some and long for others, but Lindel was still the same as before. The people selling in the plaza were still there and there were still people looking for party members. I saw people moving busily to go out to hunt and others sitting on terraces and chatting.

'This is nice.'

That was when I saw a familiar face…

'That bastard… '

When I saw the back of the man with a large frame, he seemed familiar and even the woman that was beside him looked familiar as well. I was certain that the woman with the long hair was our guild's mage. I wasn't sure what they were talking about, but seeing the smile on their faces made them seem like they were happy.

"*Oh!*"

Jung Ha-Yan must have realized who those people were because she was surprised and exclaimed at the sight. I didn't need to explain. I wasn't sure if they were in a relationship, but they seemed really close. Of course, I called out his name while smiling and I saw him turn around with a surprised look.

"Deok-Gu!"

"*Huh?*"

A smile appeared on Park Deok-Gu's face and he reacted as if I came back from the dead. I was sure he wouldn't react that way even if a person kicked open their own coffin and emerged from it. His smile lasted only for a few moments before it was quickly replaced with a frown. He wasn't in a bad mood or angry. Rather, it was more like he was desperately trying to hold back his tears.

"Hy-Hyung-nim!" he yelled.

He was like an eight ton truck with a broken wheel. The way he ran toward me reminded me of a charging rhino. He was about to hug me without mercy because he was happy to see me and I thought about sidestepping to avoid him, but I was happy to see him as well. In the end, I ended up making a bad choice.

"Hyung-nim!"

When I opened my arms, he seemed like he was touched and when I hugged him, I couldn't breathe.

'Shit… I shouldn't have hugged him.'

I was worried that he was going to break my back, but I patted Park Deok-Gu's back. The others looked at us strangely as we shared a brotherly hug, but Park Deok-Gu seemed like he didn't care. He even picked me up and started spinning me around.

'This bastard… '

After I was spun in the plaza for a while, he spoke. "Hyung-nim! You should've told me that you're coming back…"

"*Hahaha.* I'm sure the others know about it. You didn't see the griffons flying?" I asked.

"*Oh!* Were you the one riding the white griffon?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"I heard you moved up in the world hyung-nim… nice… by the way, did something happen there? You look like you lost weight." He pointed out.

"It's nothing like that. Actually, things have become better for me lately," I answered.

"By the way, I read in the newspaper that you… got framed or something. My heart dropped after reading that. Did you get that taken care of?" he asked.

"Of course! I was going to tell you about it anyway. It wasn't a big deal, so you don't have to worry. Didn't you read the letter I sent?" I asked him.

"I mean, I had an idea about what happened, but since we didn't know the situation, we had no idea what was going on. I would've gone if I was able to, but a letter came every time I thought about doing that… so I thought everything was okay. Still, I couldn't sleep because I was so worried," Park Deok-Gu explained.

"*Hahaha*."

"Hey, it's nothing to laugh about, hyung-nim. Seriously. Even that dude Hyun-Sung was about to rush over there. Oh, I didn't see you there, noonim. How have you been?" he asked Jung Ha-Yan.

That was good news…

"Hi, Deok-Gu oppa. We-We've been doing well," she answered.

"Wait, we should hurry back to the guild. I'm sure everyone will be happy once they find out that you're back." He suggested.

"By the way, what are you and Miss Jung-Yeon doing here?" I asked him.

When I asked while glancing at Hwang Jung-Yeon, I noticed Park Deok-Gu being hesitant. Despite calling himself the love doctor, he seemed embarrassed. Seeing

Hwang Jung-Yeon lowering her head while blushing made me think that there had been some progress in their relationship.

“L-Let’s hurry up and go back to the guild, Mr. Ki-Young. It’s nice to see you again after so long,” Hwang Jung-yeon said.

“*Ahem*, let’s go,” Park Deok-Gu agreed.

The way they tried to change the subject was kind of cute and thanks to them, the way back to the guild wasn’t going to be boring. Jung Ha-Yan and Hwang Jung-Yeon were catching up and Park Deok-Gu and I were talking, but it was mostly about the guild.

“How’s Miss Hee-Young and Ye-Ri doing?” I asked.

“Hee-Young noonim is the same as always and the kid’s growing up pretty fast,” Park Deok-Gu answered.

“*Huh?*”

“Kids usually grow pretty fast at that age. I can’t really tell since I see her every day, but according to the guild members, she grew up a lot and I think she’s been getting stronger pretty fast… you… might be surprised after seeing her,” he explained.

“I see…” I said, nodding

“I guess you’re not that curious, hyung-nim.” He pointed out.

“It’s not that. I already expected her to grow up fast. What about you Deok-Gu?” I asked him.

I used Mind’s Eye to check his stats while talking to him and noticed that his overall stats weren't that bad. I wasn’t that impressed, however, because I saw a lot of powerful people recently, but it seemed like his stats were growing at a steady pace.

[Checking Player Park Deok-Gu’s Status Window and Potential]

[Name - Park Deok-Gu]

[Title - None. Please work harder.]

[Age - 23]

[Nature - A simple, ignorant and ardent person]

[Job - Steel Tank - Rare Rank]

[Stats]

[Strength - 67/Above epic growth limit]

[Agility - 34/Below rare growth limit]

[Stamina - 70/Above epic growth limit]

[Intelligence - 27/Below rare growth limit]

[Endurance - 71/Above epic growth limit]

[Luck - 23/Below average growth limit]

[Magic - 22/Above average growth limit]

[Overall Review - The player's high strength, endurance, and stamina shows that he has been growing well. His endurance and stamina that are over 70 are the most noticeable. It's unfortunate that his magic is lacking in comparison, but if he works hard, I'm sure he'll become a top player. No matter how much I think about it, his magic stat is really unfortunate.]

'His endurance is 70… '

It wasn't bad, actually, it was amazing. Considering the fact that it wasn't easy to grow once your stat reached 60, having your main stat at 70 was pretty amazing.

'He worked hard.'

I was sure that he had been working really hard because he had to catch up to the

other geniuses. Of course, there was still a limit to how much he could catch up to them because I knew better than anyone that you couldn't change the limits of the talent you were born with. Still, I had a feeling that this pig was going to achieve just that. To break that prejudice.

"Well I… it wasn't anything amazing… I just worked as hard as the others," Park Deok-Gu answered.

"Oh yeah?" I asked.

"I just trained every day. My stats increased and I also visited the sunbaes I met last time to learn from them, but I don't think I grew that much," he explained.

"How much did you grow?" I asked him.

"My stamina and endurance are over 70 now, but my strength is only 67 and my magic stat seems like it doesn't want to increase…" he said with a disappointed tone.

"You're doing fine," I complimented him.

"What?"

"You're doing fine so just keep doing what you've been doing," I told him.

"*Ohh…*"

"There's no need to compare yourself to others, Deok-Gu. If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll get rewarded for it someday. It's fine to contemplate about it, but don't think too much about it and if you're having a hard time, you can come to me. If you look at the stats of the other free city citizens that started out with us or the people that had no choice but to choose a non-combatant job, you'll understand just how fast you're growing," I explained, comforting him.

"H-Hyung-nim."

"There's the saying, fortune favors the prepared," I added.

Even though I said that, I had a guilty conscience because I knew very well that effort could easily betray a human's expectations, but this simple-minded guy seemed impressed by my words. I quickly changed the subject because I was afraid that he

was going to try to hug me again.

“Did they complete everything I ordered them to do?”

“*Oh,* I’m sure they’re done. I’m not sure myself, but the Kim Mi-Young lady you picked has been taking care of her own tasks as well as other tasks,” Park Deok-Gu answered.

“That’s a relief,” I commented.

“I mean, I’m sure you’ll have to check yourself, but our bro seemed like he has been doing fine,” he told me.

“Anything else?” I asked.

“There’s a new person that joined the guild and I think our bro recruited them himself. He’s nice, friendly, and strong too… *oh!* While you were away, he has been taking care of the guild as the general administration manager. He has also been getting along with the bro so well that they’re always together,” Park Deok-Gu replied.

“…”

I felt anxious for some reason.

“And?” I asked, hinting that he should continue.

“I’m not sure how to describe him, but it feels like he possesses both literature and martial arts talents. He’s smart and good at fighting at the same time,” Park Deok-Gu continued.

I thought someone was going to fill my place while I was gone, but I never imagined a new person would join the guild and when he mentioned that the new member was close to Kim Hyun-Sung, my heart dropped.

‘Shit… Hyun-Sung.’

I naturally felt anxious. I expected Kim Hyun-Sung to hire talented people since he knew a lot of them, but it happened faster than I thought and I was sure that some of them were people he knew from his past life. The people he had built a bond with

may start appearing as well, so as Kim Hyun-Sung's closest staff, hearing that made me nervous. It felt like fate was playing a joke because I saw Kim Hyun-Sung walking from far away with a person by his side. He was having a lively conversation with a person holding a spear and I noticed a bright smile on his face.

"*Oh,* I guess the dude came here to see you, hyung-nim." Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

I obviously didn't hear what Park Deok-Gu had just said because I was focused on how Kim Hyun-Sung was enjoying his conversation with the other person.

'You never even smiled at me like that, you bastard… '

CHAPTER 143
HOME (3)

I felt really sad. I wasn't sure if this was the right expression, but it felt I had just caught my wife flirting with another guy when I was on my way home from a business trip with a gift for her in my hands.

'I worked so hard… '

I even got you a griffon. I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung would be able to get one a few years later, but it was still a fact that I got him one sooner than that. Even across the continent, there weren't many people with griffons so they were priceless. Of course, that wasn't the only thing I brought with me. The griffon was the main gift, but I prepared more gifts. The Red Mercenary Guild member brought me so many things, including items, that it could fill up one small room. I could have made them all mine, but I decided to give them all to our regressor. However, I began to rethink giving him the griffon after I saw that bright smile he had never shown me before.

'That bastard… '

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung waving his hand toward me and even though he was smiling at me, it was different from the sincere smile I had seen on him earlier. But still, I decided to wave back at him.

"Mr. Ki-Young," he spoke up.

"*Oh,* Mr. Hyun-Sung."

He didn't run toward me like Park Deok-Gu did, but after walking a bit faster, he hugged me which made me feel a bit better. Despite that, the presence of the person next to him bothered me.

"I knew you had returned when I saw the griffon. I'm glad I came out earlier," Kim Hyun-Sung remarked.

"There wasn't a need for you to come out," I told him.

“Of course, I should come out and greet you especially since I’m sure you went through a lot. I heard that you had been involved in a lot of things, but I’m glad you overcame them all,” he told me.

“*Haha*.”

“What happened to Ito Sota of the Yamato Guild?” he asked.

“It’s exactly as you heard. He was executed. He had so many charges, so there was no way for him to escape from his crimes. I wanted to save him from the death penalty, but Father Basel was pretty stubborn,” I explained.

“I see…”

“It seemed like he did something more than just simply insulting the goddess, but I don’t know the details…” I added.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t seem bitter, instead he seemed more relieved that Ito Sota had died. Based on his reaction, I couldn’t help but realize that Ito Sota must not have played a positive role in the future Kim Hyun-Sung once lived.

‘That’s just who he is… ’

Obviously, Ito Sota acted that way because he was well-off and even launched a preemptive attack on Lindel. Of course, he wouldn’t have become a demon worshipper and cause chaos in the Holy Empire like I had shown Father Basel, but at the very least, the future him would’ve caused Kim Hyun-Sung to frown.

‘It’s a good thing he’s dead.’

Even a blind squirrel could find a nut every once in a while.

When I asked Kim Hyun-Sung about Ito Sota, he answered immediately.

“Have you heard about Ito Sota?”

“I have. People have been talking about the other city when mentioning his name and I have heard that he wasn’t the greatest person. Before this incident, rumors about him had been spreading, so I’m sure he got what he deserved. You shouldn’t feel guilty about it, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

‘I don’t know what it means to feel guilty, Hyun-Sung.’

It could have been the starting point for war between Lindel and Celia or backstabbing the Holy Empire, but the important thing was the regressor’s future had become even more beautiful thanks to Sota’s death. Now, it didn’t matter what Sota had done in the future that our regressor had live in.

“What have you been up to, Mr. Hyun-Sung?” I asked.

“My routine has been the same for me; I needed to stabilize the guild first and foremost, after all. When we heard the bad news, we have already completed the majority of the tasks you asked us to do and if you didn’t send us the letter telling us that we didn’t need to come, we would’ve gone to the Holy Empire,” he responded.

“*Hahaha*. You didn’t really have to worry about it; it actually went smoothly. I’m not sure if you heard, but the Vatican gave me a position,” I told him.

“What?“

"The position will, of course, guarantee my status as a free city citizen because Father Basel likes me. I don’t really deserve it, but they gave me the honorary bishop position,” I added.

“*Oh,* I see.” He nodded.

“I’m sure you haven’t heard the details because it has been a while since the Vatican gave a position to an outsider. It has been more than 254 years to be exact. I’m on the same level as the archbishop and have many benefits… so I’m sure it’ll help our guild as well,” I explained.

“*Ah!*”

I guess no one in his past life received this kind of position or he simply wasn’t interested in it, but when I mentioned that my rank was the same as the archbishop's, Hyun-Sung’s face brightened up. I knew he would react like this. After all, the shrine offered many benefits aside from being able to use the heresy inquisitors and the holy knights.

‘It’s me, Hyun-Sung. Your talented hyung.’

“I never expected this much… it’s more than I thought. Good job,” he said, complimenting me.

‘You think that’s all?’

Naturally, I thought about opening the present, but I heard Kim Hyun-Sung talk. He seemed like he wanted to show something off and I had an idea as to what he was going to talk about. He was probably going to introduce me to the person next to him. I understood his feeling of wanting to boast about his achievements, but I felt a bit bitter about it.

“We’ve actually changed a few things. I’m not sure if Mr. Deok-Gu has already told you, but we’ve recruited someone while you were away,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“*Ah,* so it’s this person,” I said.

“That’s right. This is Miss Jo Hye-Jin and she has recently joined the Blue Guild,” he introduced.

The woman next to Kim Hyun-Sung was holding a long spear. She was kind of tall and the way she tied her hair back reminded me of an old samurai. The atmosphere she gave off reminded me of a soldier or a knight and even though she had well-defined facial features, she seemed to have a stern personality.

‘I think she actually has a stern personality… ’

“My name is Jo Hye-Jin. I’ve heard a lot of things about you, sub guild master Lee Ki-Young,” she said, introducing herself.

“Ohh, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. It’s nice to meet you. I’m Lee Ki-Young,” I replied.

“You’re exactly as how everyone described you. I am looking forward to working with you,” she said.

Naturally, I used Mind’s Eye and it immediately displayed her information.

[Name - Jo Hye-Jin]

[Title - Castle Rock's Stubborn Woman]

[Age - 25]

[Nature - Upright Fundamentalist]

[Job - Spear Specialist - Epic Rank]

[Job Effect - Acquired basic spear knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired intermediate spear knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced spear knowledge]

[Job Effect - Acquired advanced magic knowledge]

[Stats]

[Strength - 75/ Above epic growth limit]

[Agility - 82/Above epic growth limit]

[Stamina - 87/Above epic growth limit]

[Intelligence - 51/Below epic growth limit]

[Endurance - 71/Below epic growth limit]

[Luck - 50/Below epic growth limit]

[Magic - 60/Below epic growth limit]

[Attribute - Hard Worker - Legendary Rank]

[Overall Review - Nothing really stands out, but she knows about martial arts better than anyone. Not only that but her nature and attributes give her the power to grow above her growth limit. Out of all the geniuses you've seen so far, she's a different type of genius.]

'Nothing stands out my ass… '

There were many people in Lindel, but this was my first time seeing someone with her stats and potential. Excluding people like Cha Hee-Ra, I had never seen anyone else with this much potential. Even though Jo Hye-Jin didn't have above legendary stats, I couldn't deny the fact that she was well-balanced and it was just like the overall review stated. She was strong. Her stats were either above or below epic, so even if she did administrative work, she would do well, which was rather unfair.

"I've never seen you… in Lindel before. But of course, I haven't seen every person in this large city…" I stated.

"You're right, Mr. Ki-Young. Miss Jo Hye-Jin used to be in Castle Rock, not Lindel. She left her previous guild due to an unavoidable incident and after arriving in Lindel, she decided to join the Blue Guild," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"Castle Rock?" I asked.

"Yes, that's right," he answered.

Castle Rock wasn't a free city filled with free city citizens. It was the Holy Empire's territory. I heard that a few free city citizens had settled there because there were a lot of useful hunting grounds and dungeons. It was located a little further south and considering the fact that it was close to the monster forest, it wouldn't be a bad idea to settle down there.

'Of course… '

There were disadvantages as well. Not only were you required to pay more in taxes since it wasn't a free city, but there were a lot of limitations. The free city citizens were somewhat free from the imperial law, but that only applied in Lindel. Assuming that you settled in a city controlled by a noble, there were things you had to give up.

"I see," I said.

Now that I thought about it…

'I think Lady Marilyn was from Castle Rock.'

I was certain of it. Well, it didn't really matter where Jo Hye-Jin was from because

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he trusted her a lot—it was as if he knew her from his past life. Her title was Castle Rock's stubborn woman and her nature was upright fundamentalist. No matter how you looked at it, she and I weren't going to get along because she seemed inflexible. I didn't really care about principles, so we would naturally be incompatible.

I wasn't sure if Kim Hyun-Sung had realized this or not, but he was busy complimenting her and for some reason, I felt anxious.

'I don't think I can work with her... '

I was sure of it. Of course, it was just an assumption based on her nature, but I could bet on the fact that I wasn't compatible with people like her.

"Miss Hye-Jin helped with some of the tasks you asked me to do," Kim Hyun-Sung mentioned.

"*Oh,* I see. I'm sure it was tiring, thank you," I told her.

"No, I just did what I needed to do. I just completed the work based on the documents you organized," she said.

"Thank you," I said once more.

"She's a very competent and nice person. I'm certain you'll understand what I mean once you talk to her, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I see," I replied, nodding.

"She's also very powerful. I wanted to appoint her to a key position within the guild right away, but I needed your approval as well, so I had to put it on hold," he added.

"*Oh...*"

The fact that he had done that made me thankful. I thought it was a topic I wouldn't have any say in, but this meant that Kim Hyun-Sung was respecting me at the least. But even so…

"It's fine. Your offer is still really burdensome," Jo Hye-Jin commented.

It was nice that she rejected the offer.

“Let’s not stand here. How about we return to the guild house? Ye-Ri and Miss Hee-Young will return once they’re done with their work,” Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

“Sure.”

“Okay, Master.”

Kim Hyun-Sung was obviously excited about introducing his new friend to his other friends. It seemed like he wanted me to work together with Jo Hye-Jin, but I could already tell what it was going to be like in the future. Since she was sincerely loyal to him, I felt like I had become a disloyal retainer. As someone that wanted to be the closest to the regressor, I was in a crisis.

‘Hyun-Sung, I trust you… ’

CHAPTER 144
HOME (4)

We talked about various topics on the way to the guild house. Even though we mostly talked about how we had been and what we had been doing, it was still enjoyable. At first, Jung Ha-Yan was wary of Jo Hye-Jin, but after realizing that she didn't make contact with me, she lost interest in her. She was simply…

'…A new person who has just joined the guild.'

This was what she thought of Jo Hye-Jin and I expected Jung Ha-Yan to react that way. However, Park Deok-Gu was different. He didn't seem that way when he saw me, but when he saw Jo Hye-Jin, he looked at her in a positive way. They must have gotten close while I was away because they looked really friendly and the conversation they were having wasn't bad either.

"Miss Hye-Jin," Deok-Gu called out.

"Yes?"

"What do you think about our hyung-nim?" he asked

"I think he's wise, just like what everyone told me. I've always been curious as to who managed to organize the tasks so well despite the amount of work and he's exactly what I imagined him to be," she answered.

"If it wasn't for Mr. Ki-Young, it would've taken the guild a lot longer to become stable," Kim Hyun-Sung added.

"I agree, Master. The amount of work was too much for one person…" she mumbled.

"You're giving me too much credit. I didn't do them all by myself. I was able to do them because other people helped me. There are still a lot of people within the Blue Guild, after all," I explained.

This was the kind of conversation we had. I really felt like I had come back home

when I saw Kim Hyun-Sung having fun and Park Deok-Gu chatting. Of course, that was if I excluded the person who had unexpectedly joined the guild.

I felt a bit heartbroken, but I understood why Kim Hyun-Sung was in a good mood. Despite the fact that Jo Hye-Jin was still growing and she hadn't reached her potential just yet, she was already *this* strong. Just by looking at her potential, she was obviously going to become even stronger in the future. Her attribute was Hard Worker, so she could grow strong enough to become a guild master, and assuming they knew each other in his previous life, Kim Hyun-Sung would obviously like Jo Hye-Jin.

The important thing here was the position I was going to take—was I going to reject or accept her? Selecting the latter was reasonable because people like Jo Hye-Jin were helping the guild. When I thought about Kim Hyun-Sung's kingdom becoming bigger and bigger, a competent person like her would definitely be useful. Her literature and martial arts were good, but her martial arts and potential power were beyond imagination so there wasn't a reason for me to reject her.

The problem was that my influence was going to become smaller. As someone that had Kim Hyun-Sung's love all to myself, I wasn't happy when a rival like her had appeared out of nowhere.

'It's hard for me to imagine Kim Hyun-Sung going crazy over a girl… '

I was certain that wouldn't be the case. However, I became worried that Kim Hyun-Sung would neglect his original party if his comrades from his past life, who were just as competent as Jo Hye-Jin, continued to join us. Since Park Deok-Gu and my combat capabilities would certainly be lower in comparison to theirs, we could become useless to them. Of course, if you think about it in another way, a division of power would be necessary since Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't want one side to have too much power.

But I couldn't help but think that things were moving along faster than I wanted. He could have appointed someone to keep me in check after his kingdom was established. Right now, we didn't have the luxury to talk about growing *fast* or about *principles*. Naturally, it was just my imagination telling me that Jo Hye-Jin was going to attack me. In addition, my personality made it so that I would always think of the worst-case scenario in order to prepare for it. Still, Kim Hyun-Sung's smile bothered me.

'I'll just go with my plan for now.'

Sometimes it helped to be worried ahead of time, but that wasn't always the case. Being happy about the fact that a strong person had joined our guild was the right reaction to have for now.

As we continued walking, I soon saw the Blue Guild's guild house and I expected people to welcome me back, but everyone looked really busy. I saw people outside the guild house and the guild staff members were even preparing *something.*

'What's going on?'

I felt better after immediately realizing the fact that they were getting ready for a party. Sun Hee-Young, Kim Ye-Ri, and Lee Sang-Hee started greeting me one by one.

"You're back…"

"It has been a while, Ye-Ri," I said.

Even though she didn't say much, the child looked at me quietly and greeted me.

"Mr. Ki-Young! You're finally back!" Sun Hee-Young excitedly exclaimed.

"It's been a while, Miss Hee-Young," I said, nodding.

Sun Hee-Young's face brightened up a bit as she greeted me.

"You've done well, sub guild master."

"Thank you, Miss Lee Sang-Hee."

Even the guild's advisor came to greet me. Aside from them, team leader, Kim Mi-Young came to see me and even Park Joong-Ki smiled brightly at me. Based on their reactions, I guess they were no longer busy because they all seemed relaxed and after greeting me, they all started talking to Jung Ha-Yan, which made the guild pretty noisy. During all of this, people were serving food in the yard and it became obvious who prepared all of this. I was sure he gave the order as soon as he saw the griffon.

'Hyun-Sung… '

This guy definitely knew how to play hard to get and although it didn't make up for the disappointment I felt, no one would be angry at their own welcoming party. It really felt like I was back home and I guess Kim Hyun-Sung saw through my feelings because he spoke with a small smile.

"Welcome back, Mr. Ki-Young."

"Welcome back, sub guild master."

"Good job."

The short party began and naturally, the guild staff members enjoyed the party. Even though they were going to be the ones to clean the mess up, they seemed like they were enjoying it for now. Many people got drunk and everyone was enjoying the celebration. Now that I thought about it, this was the first time I felt relaxed after joining the Blue Guild. Jung Ha-Yan was sitting next to me while drinking her juice and Park Deok-Gu was stuffing his face while walking around and naturally, Hwang Jung-Yeon was standing next to him. The two must have gotten close because they seemed like a couple as they walked around. As time passed, more and more people got drunk, including the guild staff members.

"*Hiccup*… do you know how difficult it was? I honestly resented the sub guild master a little bit."

"You've done well, Miss Mi-Young. *Oh!* I should call you team leader Kim Mi-Young from now on," I said, complimenting her.

"What?" she asked.

"It was postponed, but I know better than anyone just how hard you've worked, Miss Kim Mi-Young. We'll discuss your pay tomorrow," I told her.

"*Oh!!!*"

"You'll be able to work with better treatment and I'll make sure your children receive better support," I added.

"*Oh!!!* Th-Thank you, thank you," she exclaimed in joy.

I didn't forget to take care of the administration team that had been working hard all

this time. Out of all of them, Kim Mi-Young worked the hardest, so she would naturally receive a promotion, and seeing Park Joong-Ki look at her with envy, it made me think that I needed to take care of him too.

“You deserve it. By the way, I heard Miss Jo Hye-Jin also helped a lot,” I said.

“She did. She seemed pretty uptight, but… she’s a nice person,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

‘She has a good reputation.’

It seemed like Jo Hye-Jin was liked by many people and as we continued talking, I heard a loud voice beside me.

“Hyung-nim! Try this, hyung-nim!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“You try it too, Miss Ha-Yan.”

Sun Hee-Young and Park Deok-Gu approached us. They probably brought a small plate of food over to us because it was delicious.

“It’s really delicious, Mr. Ki-Young. It’s better than the food sold by the restaurant nearby…” Sun Hee-Young commented.

“*Oh,* really?” I asked.

“You should try it too, Miss Ha-Yan,” Sun Hee-Young offered.

“Th-Thank you,” Jung Ha-Yan stammered.

“It’s really delicious. I was really surprised, seriously!” Park Deok-Gu remarked.

Park Deok-Gu was holding a bowl of stew and it was different from the fancy food that had come out so far. The stew was so simple that it made me think that the guild’s chef probably wasn’t the one who made it. The thickly sliced beef looked good, but this was the type of food you could easily make during an expedition, so I couldn’t understand why he was making such a big deal out of it.

“Hurry up and try it! Come on!” Park Deok-Gu yelled.

“Fine,” I said.

After giving in to his pestering, I took a bite from his spoon and I was hit with something unexpected.

“*Huh?*”

The difference in taste caused me to look up.

“Isn’t it tasty?” he asked.

‘It’s delicious… ’

I didn’t answer Park Deok-Gu's question, but I was certain that my expression said it all because my eyes widened the moment I took a bite.

“Who made this?” I asked.

“The guild master bro and Miss Lee Sang-Hee. They went to the small kitchen and made it, but it’s so delicious! The meat just melts in your mouth, right?! It’s so tender!” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“*Huh?*”

“It just melts in your mouth, right?!” he exclaimed, once again.

“Yeah, it’s really delicious,” I told him.

“What do you think, noonim?” he asked Jung Ha-Yan.

“I-It’s delicious… Deok-Gu oppa. It’s… really good,” she stuttered.

For some reason, Jung Ha-Yan sounded defeated.

“Don’t you know how to cook, noonim?” Deok-Gu asked.

“*Huh? Oh…* well… I do! I did learn a few dishes…” she answered.

Obviously, Jung Ha-Yan didn’t look or sound confident and even though she headed toward the small kitchen, her expression resembled the way Ito Sota looked when he

went inside the statue. She looked like a prisoner on death row walking up to the guillotine. It seemed like it'd be a good idea not to touch the dishes she made today.

Looking around, I saw people in pairs and small groups, each enjoying the party in their own way, but Jo Hye-Jin caught my eye. She was sitting to the side, biting her lips quietly, so I approached her thinking that it would be a good idea to say something to her. Aside from her nature, I was curious about the kind of person she was and since Jung Ha-Yan was challenging herself, it was the perfect time for me to get to know her more.

After excusing myself from Kim Mi-Young, who seemed like she wanted to talk more, I started walking and I noticed Jo Hye-Jin looking at me.

"What do you think about the guild?" I asked.

"It's a nice place. I had somewhat of an expectation after hearing the rumors, but it's better than I thought," Jo Hye-Jin answered.

"I see…"

"The atmosphere seems a lot better now that you're here, sub guild master," she added.

"It's not always like this. It's my first time having a party like this…" I told her.

"I can see how much the guild members trust their guild master and sub guild master," she remarked.

"*Oh…*"

"I had also been in the tutorial dungeon and after arriving at the continent, I noticed people separating due to different interests and trivial issues, but the members here look like they're good people," she explained.

Her words sounded sentimental, but she was eating in an orderly manner which was the total opposite of how her words sounded like. I thought maybe she was drunk, but I guess she wasn't that bad of a person. I had an idea how her first party disbanded and why she left Castle Rock to come here.

'That's just how people are… '

“It seems like Mr. Hyun-Sung really trusts you, Mr. Ki-Young. While we were on our way to meet you, he kept talking about you,” Jo Hye-Jin told me.

“I see,” I said.

“I thought you weren’t really the type to smile, so it was surprising,” she added.

The things that Jo Hye-Jin was saying surprised me a lot and that was when I realized that I had misunderstood everything. I smiled when I saw him cooking with Lee Sang-Hee.

‘I was right to trust you, you bastard!’

I realized that I had been properly rewarded for being loyal to the regressor. There was nothing more I needed to say—Kim Hyun-Sung trusted me more than the people he had connections with in his past life.

CHAPTER 145
HOME (5)

Until a moment ago, I didn't want to give Kim Hyun-Sung the griffon, but it was human nature to be cunning so I wanted to show him the gift right now. I knew he wasn't the type to easily show his emotions, but who knew he could smile so brightly?

'It's nice… '

Honestly, I was almost disappointed because even though it was a short period of time, I had been loyal to our regressor for a year. I was worried about whether I had been pouring water into a sieve, but it had been rewarding. I was getting fond of him, so it would be strange if he didn't feel the same way.

When I first saw his serious expression in the tutorial dungeon, I thought maybe this regressor had lost his humanity after experiencing twists and turns, but the power of our friendship was slowly melting his heart. Thinking about it now, he showed various emotions recently. At first, he treated us in a business-like manner and the fact that we were still talking formally was proof of that. Recently, he was often joking and smiling, but I was anxious because we were still pretty distant. However, our relationship was improving more than I thought.

'It's not good to be so unsympathetic… '

If Kim Hyun-Sung had to choose between a friend in crisis and a world on the brink of extinction, I wanted him to pick the former.

'He should save me first.'

He had to save me first no matter what. Obviously, I wasn't going to say embarrassing lines like…

'Save yourself!'

Or…

'Save the world for me!'

Or…

'Live a happy life. Live your life to the fullest for me!'

Maybe…

'It's a nice day to die. It has been fun, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Please leave this to me.'

And just die… If he decided to apologize and chose to save the world instead of me, it would be as if everything had gone to the dogs. It was a sign of hope that Kim Hyun-Sung was becoming fond of me.

I guess I couldn't control my emotions after hearing the *really* good news because Jo Hye-Jin was looking at me as if she was amused.

"You seem happy."

"Mr. Hyun-Sung usually doesn't express his emotions, so I never knew that he thinks of me like that," I told her.

"It must be nice to have a comrade," she commented.

"He's more like a friend or a younger brother. I don't know if Mr. Hyun-Sung feels the same way, but that's how I feel about him and it's the same for the others in the Blue Guild," I explained.

"I see…"

"I can't say that we've spent a long time together, but the party members and I have made a bond," I said.

"A bond…"

She would be amazed at how much effort we had put into creating that bond. As long as it wouldn't kill me, I was willing to get stabbed for Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, and Park Deok-Gu.

'I've actually done that, though… '

“I heard you came here because of an issue you had at Castle Rock. Would it be okay if I asked what happened?” I probed.

“*Oh,* that’s…”

Naturally, I was curious as to how this woman ended up in this guild, but it seemed like Jo Hye-Jin didn’t want to tell me. She kept stuttering, but it didn’t matter if she didn’t want to tell me because I had an informant that look into it for me…

‘I guess I need to write a letter to Lady Marilyn.’

Seeing how she didn’t want to tell me, there was obviously something fishy. She had either made a mistake or had something to hide. From the start, it was strange that she chose the Blue Guild, a guild on the verge of dying with her stats. Of course, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung worked hard to get her to join us, but I couldn’t help but think that something was off.

‘And Hyun-Sung accepted her despite knowing that… ’

Kim Hyun-Sung was somewhat of a sweet talker, so I was sure he accepted her knowing that there was going to be some kind of penalty considering what she had done because she was worth it. It only took a moment for me to decide on doing my own investigation, so I didn’t need to pressure her anymore. Having a lot of connections was useful during situations like this.

“You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to and I’m not questioning you so you don’t have to be nervous. I read your profile briefly when I was in my room and I noticed that you’ve done so much that you’re too good for our guild,” I told her.

“You’re overpraising me,” she responded.

“I think I’m the only one that hasn’t welcomed you, so welcome to the Blue Guild, Miss Hye-Jin,” I said, belatedly welcoming her.

“Thank you, sub guild master.”

“Sure…”

Our short conversation ended here and I didn’t need to worry about splitting the powers right now. It may be different a year or two later, but I just had to remind her

that I was above her.

When I walked a few steps after greeting her, I noticed Jung Ha-Yan slowly approaching me. She was holding a plate filled with creative dishes. Park Deok-Gu avoided my gaze while Sun Hee-Young slipped away. Naturally, it didn't take me long to realize that I shouldn't eat Ha-Yan's food, but when I avoided her gaze, she took a step forward.

"O-Oppa, would you like to try?" she asked.

"*Um…*"

I didn't like gambling. Of course, there were times when it was necessary to do so, but this wasn't one of those times. Since I already knew what was going to happen, I had no choice but to change the subject.

"Actually, do you want to go to the Red Mercenary Guild with me?"

"*Huh?*"

"I think it would be best if I gave him his gift today," I told her.

"I see…"

A person would usually become emotional around 10 PM, and it was a decent time to give the griffon to our regressor, but the problem was that Jung Ha-Yan seemed disappointed that I wouldn't eat her food. Considering the fact that I had nothing to give to her despite her going with me to the Holy Empire, I thought that taking a bite of her food, at the least, was the best thing to do. The moment I took a bite without thinking, I tasted something strange despite swallowing it immediately.

'Shit… '

Although I was worried about the unidentified slimy food that I had just swallowed, I had to say something because I had to get out of this situation as soon as possible.

"It's good."

"*Ah!*" Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

“Let’s get going,” I said with a smile.

“Okay!” she answered excitedly.

Jung Ha-Yan must be excited about discreetly going out together, but our goal wasn’t to do something outside. Our goal was to pick up the present we left at the Red Mercenary Guild.

Thinking about it now, it had been a while since we came out in Lindel at night. The slums were a dangerous place as always, but it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that the square and the area where the guilds gathered were safer at night. There were orbs that lit up the place until morning and merchants at the night market. Many of the houses were lit up and of course, the Red Mercenary Guild was no exception. There wasn’t a need to call for the Mercenary Queen since we wouldn’t stay long and I couldn’t help but focus on the griffon and the items stored in their warehouse.

“*Coo.*”

There were two griffons—a white one and a black one. Everyone seemed amazed by the fact that I was walking around with two griffons and if I had to make a comparison, it was like riding a foreign car in the countryside. Even the people in the city looked at the griffons with amazement and their reaction was natural because there were only four of these in Lindel.

‘This is my present to you, Hyun-Sung.’

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t different from those people and I was sure he rode a griffon often during his past life. Moreover, no man would dislike a car. These guys were also pretty practical and they could even be used in combat. In addition, since the black griffon looked pretty sharp and charismatic, it would fit Kim Hyun-Sung pretty well. Since Ito Sota really cared about his outer appearance, I was sure he took care of the griffon pretty well.

The sound of people murmuring got louder and they started gathering around me. I didn’t experience this back on Earth, so I never imagined I would experience it here. Seeing them stare at me until I reached the guild house made me feel burdened, but Jung Ha-Yan looked around as if she was showing off that I was her boyfriend.

‘This is embarrassing… ’

But she seemed happy with the attention…

The moment we arrived at the guild house, the people inside were surprised because they thought that we only went out to stroll around. They didn't expect us to come back with griffons in tow.

"Hyung-nim, where did you… *huh?* That's…"

"I was actually going to tell you in private, but… I thought this was the best time. We were having a party, so I thought it would be good to give you a gift," I explained.

"Woaaah!"

No one disliked gifts. The guild staff members didn't seem interested because it didn't involve them, but I prepared gifts for them as well.

"I couldn't prepare gifts for every staff member, so I prepared simple gifts for you all," I told them.

"Yay!" they exclaimed.

It wasn't a simple gift. They were valuable items from high-end brands. The men received fountain pen sets and watches while the women received make-up sets and bags. They were pretty expensive but compared to the money I recently made, this was nothing and naturally, I wrote a letter as well and wrote each of their names. This was what having a social life was all about. Just remembering the names of your subordinates would boost their morale and seeing Jung Ha-Yan handing them the gifts made me nod automatically.

"I'm not discriminating, but I prepared gifts for the executives as well, so please don't feel disappointed," I told them.

There wasn't a reason for them to be disappointed because the non-combatant staff members would usually be thankful when they received gifts like this.

"Since you obtained a shield during the last expedition, here's a sword…" I told Park Deok-Gu.

"*Huh?* Th-Thanks. Woah!" Park Deok-Gu mumbled before exclaiming in shock.

Park Deok-Gu's eyes widened when he saw the item's description instead of it being a heavy type of weapon. I was certain that he was surprised by the sword's stats and it was natural for him to react that way because it was a pretty high-quality item out of the epic-ranked items.

[A Greatsword Made From a Giant's Dagger - Epic Rank]

[A greatsword made from fragments of a small dagger used by the now-forgotten race, the Giants. Made by the artisan, Kahalas, not many people were able to wield it properly, but if you're able to wield this heavy greatsword properly, you'll be capable of releasing destructive power. Just owning it will increase your strength by six points. No other functions exist.]

"For Miss Lee Sang-Hee and Miss Jung-Yeon, I've prepared epic-ranked necklaces," I said.

"Thank you…"

"Thank you, Mr. Ki-Young."

[Necklace Imbued with the Benigoa Goddess' Blessing - Epic Rank]

[It's a necklace imbued with the Benigoa goddess' blessing. It contains intermediate-level curse removal, detoxification, and advanced healing magic. All stats will be increased by one point.]

"A dagger for Ye-Ri…"

"Thanks…" she said in a soft voice.

[Archmage Isaac's Throwing Dagger - Epic Rank]

[A dagger capable of summoning and reverse summoning. No one knows where this dagger came from, but some experts believe that this dagger came from another dimension. The dagger is old and there are unknown letters written on the back. Agility will be increased by three points.]

"I prepared a ring for you, Miss Hee-Young," I said.

"Thank you, Mr. Ki-Young."

[Queen Carlena's Wedding Ring - Epic Rank]

[Carlena, the Queen of Ruins, treasured this wedding ring her entire life. This very simple ring explains Queen Carlena's personality better than anyone. The effect of her sincere prayer caused this ring to possess holy magic. The effects of all holy spells will increase slightly.]

They were all excellent items. Some of them I received from the shrine and the others were items we received when the Yamato Guild fell. There were other items like Ito Sota's Wind Blade and a few others that the Yamato Guild's executives used, but I thought it would be best to split them up later.

After giving everyone their gifts, the only one left was Kim Hyun-Sung. It was natural for him to feel a bit surprised by this because just a few months ago, I was the one getting gifts from him. Still, our regressor deserved it.

"I've prepared this griffon as a gift to the guild master of the Blue Guild," I announced.

"*Oooh!*"

The griffon must have realized that I was talking about it because it spread its black wings and of course, I couldn't help but take a closer look at Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction since he wasn't used to receiving gifts.

'He can't contain his smile… '

I knew he was going to like it, but he liked it even more than I had imagined. Of course, he didn't reveal a *really* big smile, but what I said about him being unable to contain his smile was based on his standards. I guess he really liked my gift because he couldn't stop smiling.

'This is how I feel about you, Hyun-Sung.'

I felt proud of this moment.

CHAPTER 146
WHISTLEBLOWER (1)

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't used to receiving gifts. I wasn't sure what he was like during his past life, but considering the fact that his potential was high, he probably gave more than he received, so of course, he would like the unexpected surprise gift. He looked like he couldn't hide his feelings and even though he wasn't laughing out loud, the smile on his face showed that he was happy.

'He likes it… '

The black griffon was taken care of very well, so if he didn't show that kind of reaction, I would've been sad. The griffon was so rare that you couldn't put a price on it and on this continent, a method of transportation where you can fly was comparable to a legendary item. Maybe that was the reason why the people around us looked surprised.

"Wow…"

When considering the fact that this griffon belonged to one person and not the *guild,* it wouldn't be easy to give it as a gift. Well, it was really easy for me, but it would probably be hard for others and even more so when you think about the many things you'd obtain by revealing this gift to the public.

'It also shows how close the guild master and the sub guild master are… '

It was a way of reaffirming my power.

'This means that I'm very loyal to my Hyun-Sung… '

This would instill the image of the loyal Lee Ki-Young into their heads.

Kim Hyun-Sung must be feeling a bit uncomfortable because he shook his head. "I-I'm okay, Mr. Ki-Young. I appreciate the thought, but… I feel bad," he mumbled.

'Of course, you should feel that way. Do you know how much this is… '

“You don’t have to feel that way, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You gave me a lot of things so think of this as me repaying for everything you did for me. *Oh!* I received another one by chance as well,” I explained.

“But…”

I expected that kind of reaction from him since the gift was too grand for it to be a simple gift, but his expression showed that he really wanted it. At this point, I realized that he refused it out of courtesy. Kim Hyun-Sung was ready to receive the griffon and he was like a student refusing to accept his uncle’s allowance. He refused with the knowledge that he was going to get it anyway.

“There was also the Juliena case, so I’ll feel worse if you keep on refusing like this. I have a griffon as well, so you can accept it without any worries,” I told him.

“I see…”

‘Hurry up and accept it. I know you’re going to, anyway… ’

We all knew Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to accept the gift. In the end, he nodded lightly.

“Well if you say so. Th-Thank you for the gift,” he said, stuttering.

‘Stop stuttering… ’

“You really don’t have to feel bad. *Haha*. Think of it as getting back the gifts you’ve given me so far,” I told him.

‘Just pay me back gradually, Hyun-Sung.’

“No, I’m the one that got more. I’ll make sure to repay you for this favor,” he said, smiling.

‘That right there! That's the attitude you should have!’

As soon as I passed the black griffon over to him, he started petting it. When the person receiving the gift looked happy, the person giving the gift would be happy too. It wasn’t just Kim Hyun-Sung who was happy; Park Deok-Gu, Sun Hee-Young, Ye-Ri, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and even Lee Sang-Hee all looked happy. That was the end of the high-quality gifting ceremony. I thought the party was going to end soon, but it

seemed like the guild members had been holding in a lot of things.

“Let’s just stay up all night. Yeah! Hyun-Sung, dude, is that alright with you?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“We’ll resume tomorrow’s work in the afternoon, then,” he answered.

“*Oh…*”

“I’m kidding. It wouldn’t be bad to take the day off and it’s a great day, so it should be fine to get drunk a little bit. Miss Hye-Jin, you should come here and join everyone,” Kim Hyun-Sung told her.

“Okay, Master,” she answered.

I was a bit tired because of the long trip, but I thought it wouldn’t be bad to spend time with everyone.

“Oppa! Try this too,” Jung Ha-Yan offered.

“Sure…”

“Mr. Ki-Young, about the next volunteer work…” Sun Hee-Young said.

“Let’s pick out a date and go,” I suggested.

“By the way, can you tell us what happened?”

“It’s kind of a long story,” I said.

The night was still young and we had a lot of time, so we started catching up once again while slowly drinking all night. Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t say much, but he laughed quietly while looking at us and Park Deok-Gu must be having fun because he was dancing around. Jo Hye-Jin looked like she hadn't fully adapted to the situation, but she still fit in with the group. Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young kept asking me questions and when Kim Hyun-Sung told Kim Ye-Ri to go to sleep, the underage girl glared at him before going into her room. There were things I was worried about right now, but I decided not to think about them for now.

When morning arrived, the festival ended and I closed my eyes while feeling restless,

but happy.

"…"

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

Moments later, I woke up after hearing something outside. I thought about wanting to sleep a bit more, but when I felt something heavy, I couldn't help but look down.

"*Oh…*"

Jung Ha-Yan was lying on top of me.

'…'

I remember taking her to her room last night, so I wasn't sure how she ended up here, but I thought that she must have come here while pretending to be drunk. She must be thinking that I wouldn't remember; well, it didn't really matter, but my body felt numb. I wasn't sure how long she had been on top of me, but this position was making my arms numb. I wasn't surprised because I experienced a similar situation when we were on our expeditions, but seeing Jung Ha-Yan pretending to sleep made me think that I shouldn't move.

Tap.

Tap.

During all of this, I kept hearing something outside my window so when I looked over, I noticed a small bird constantly pecking on the window.

'I got a letter.'

It seemed like the letter I sent to Lady Marilyn last night had been delievered.

'Nice… '

I knew I was going to get a reply soon, but the reply came faster than I thought and for someone who was curious about many things, this was good. Naturally, I was curious about Jo Hye-Jin and what happened to her at Castle Rock. I wasn't planning on using her weakness against her, but I had to know what she was hiding.

I quietly opened the window without waking up Jung Ha-Yan. The small bird entered my room and after grabbing the letter tied to one of its claws, I scribbled my reply and sent the bird back. I told her I would visit her soon, so I was sure she was going to be satisfied with my reply.

When I carefully opened the letter, I saw Lady Marilyn's letter.

[I'm so happy you sent me a letter so suddenly when it hasn't been that long since we said goodbye. Even though it hasn't been a full day, I've been secretly missing you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. The letter touched and warmed my heart that has been abandoned in the bleak winter wind. Is it my misunderstanding to think that you've read my mind?]

'What's with the unnecessary comment?'

The letter was long, so I thought maybe there was a lot of information written on it, but the majority of them were similar to what she had written before. She must've put in a lot of effort because there were traces of her writing over her words several times.

[I'm a bit embarrassed to say this as a noblewoman, but I can still see the dreamy times I spent with you at the castle. How nice would it be if I could fly like the birds in the sky? I hope you'll recognize my feelings as you read this letter.]

'What in the world… '

I didn't know why Lady Marilyn wrote that because we never met alone and we never exchanged strange feelings with each other. We had always been together with Lady Caitlyn. I mean, I did meet her just as much as I met Father Basel, but I didn't do anything that would cause her to have this kind of feeling. I tried to be as gentleman-like as possible by caring for them, but I didn't think that was enough to make her feel *that* way so I was a bit flustered by her letter. The more I read the letter, the more ridiculous it became and when I flipped the page over, I saw the information I wanted to see.

'Nice… '

[I didn't have enough time so I couldn't properly investigate, but I believe this is the information you're looking for, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I started the investigation by calling for the free city citizens and I also called for the guild member who used to be in the same guild as Jo Hye-Jin. After hearing their story, I realized the Small Stone Guild was closely related to the Castle Rock territory.]

'Okay… '

This was the information I wanted and I was sure things would be better if I continued reading the letter.

[Basically, Miss Jo Hye-Jin had been a part of the Small Stone Guild, and she was once questioned by the inspection team in our territory. There were many things involved in the investigation, but I remember the charges being about smuggling monster by-products and tax evasion.]

When considering Jo Hye-Jin's nature, this wasn't like her. It was getting interesting, so I continued reading and sure enough, the things I expected were actually written in the letter.

[The reason why the investigation started was that a member of the Small Stone Guild reported it to us first. Back then, I was too young to be involved in family matters so I only heard rumors, but I know the person who helped us was Miss Jo Hye-Jin. I heard that despite being part of that guild, she reported to us for her own conscience.]

'A whistleblower?'

I realized why Jo Hye-Jin came to Lindel and joined the Blue Guild. This was a slightly complicated issue for me but I wasn't looking down or criticizing her actions. She did the right thing and she deserved to get awarded for it because she had been brave and unashamed about what she did. However, the problem was that her former guild members didn't have the same opinion. I was sure people talked about this before.

Some of the free city citizens believe that since they didn't consider themselves imperial people, they didn't have to follow the laws of the Holy Empire. This was the reason why the Free City of Lindel was built. The free city citizens were stingy when it came to tax issues and avoiding taxes became a norm. In addition, they often

ignored imperial law. I was sure the guild Jo Hye-Jin was a part of had the same thought and that probably wasn't the end of it. If a guild smuggled monster by-products and evaded tax payments, I was certain they were involved in other illegal things as well.

'Something like slave trading of other races… '

I didn't know the truth, but the fact that Jo Hye-Jin was a whistleblower who reported the guild's corruption to Castle Rock's feudal lord was important. What happened afterward was pretty obvious. She was probably labeled as a traitor amongst the members and was insulted. She was most likely isolated when people made comments about how they shouldn't have taken her in and that she only cared about herself.

'That's what our society is like… '

When thinking about how whistleblowers were treated in the modern age, the answer was easy to find. Jo Hye-Jin probably thought she wouldn't be able to join other guilds after being kicked out of the Small Stone Guild because no guild would want a member who could harm the group. Even the people who applauded and raised their thumbs at her didn't want to be directly involved with her.

'She probably couldn't find a party either… '

I guarantee it. After all, it had been a long-standing practice to manipulate the numbers when reporting the results of a successful party hunt.

When I continued reading, I realized that my assumptions were correct.

[The Small Stone Guild was able to avoid punishment due to insufficient evidence, but after asking the former guild member, I discovered that Jo Hye-Jin left the guild due to an unavoidable circumstance. Since she couldn't settle down in Castle Rock, she left for another city. I thought she might've gone to Lindel, but I never imagined you would know her, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I guess this could be considered fate.]

"I'm right…"

Jo Hye-Jin acted based on her conscience, but her actions ended up ruining her life. She was basically a bomb to all the other guilds because no one knew when she would reveal a guild's weakness. Of course, I personally understood her way of life

and I respected her for that, but my feelings were the same as the other guilds.

'Sigh… this is a big problem… '

I couldn't help but be a bit worried about a lot of things.

CHAPTER 147
WHISTLEBLOWER (2)

Of course, everything was perfectly legal and the reason why I trusted team leader Kim Mi-Young was that she was an imperial law expert and utilized her talents very well. There were a lot of loopholes within the imperial law. There probably wasn't an issue when the investigation started, but from Jo Hye-Jin's point of view, she probably thought she was in danger. If she was a fundamentalist, she probably noticed the problems within the guild while I was gone.

'That's not the only issue… '

Sun Hee-Young's volunteer work could be a problem as well. When we go to the slums to clean up the trash, some people may think that we were contributing to society by catching and killing criminals, but it was still a crime. In addition, being able to control the media was something that couldn't be understood with modern values so Jo Hye-Jin might think that the media had to be transparent and she might force them to put it into practice. To me, she was one of the worst landmines. The more power she had and the more influential she became, the more limited my movement would become.

'Hyun-Sung… '

I started resenting my regressor. Out of all the timing, why did he have to bring her in now? The guild wasn't in a position to be picky because what the Blue Guild needed right now was growth. I would probably sound selfish, but I didn't want to be held back by my conscience. I thought that maybe she might restrain herself since she had already failed once, but a person's values wouldn't change so easily. She could overlook it a few times, but it wouldn't change the fact that she and I were incompatible. Of course, I need to confirm it myself first.

When I slowly got up, Jung Ha-Yan moved as well. I only took a moment to place her on the side of the bed, wash up and leave. I thought she was pretending to be asleep, but I guess she really was sleeping.

The person I wanted to visit was Kim Mi-Young. I felt bad about visiting her on her

day off, but it was better to get things done ahead of time. Everyone must be asleep because it was quiet inside the guild house. When I knocked on Kim Mi-Young's door, I saw a child opening the door.

"*Oh!*"

"Is your mom here?" I asked them.

"M-Mom! The mister is here!"

"Mooom!"

I didn't think I was *that* old to be called mister, but hearing it directly caused my heart to break. I was sure children would call everyone mister, but I couldn't help but feel bitter about it. Anyway, Kim Mi-Young must've heard them because I heard a loud sound from inside. There was nothing more uncomfortable than your boss suddenly visiting you on your day off and as her savior, I felt the same way. I felt kind of bad, but it couldn't be helped.

'She needs to work just as much as she's getting paid.'

It was safe to say that it was like a ceremony for getting promoted to team leader.

Moments later, I saw Kim Mi-Young quickly opening the door.

"S-Sub guild master. What brings you here?"

"I'm sorry for visiting you on your day off, but I have something to discuss with you. I also need to rewrite the contract and I also wanted to visit you," I answered.

"If you would've told me…"

"I didn't want to since it's a personal matter that I don't want others to know about…"

"Excuse me?" she asked, stunned.

"It's related to your job. Anyway, do you mind if I come in?" I asked with a smile.

"Yes, but it's quite shabby…" she replied, mumbling.

This was my first time entering a guild staff member's room.

'It's not bad… '

It was better than I thought. I was sure she got a better room because she had kids, but I realized that the basic furniture and tableware were of high quality. When I slowly looked around, I noticed that her children seemed a bit discouraged. I decided to pat their heads before sitting on a chair.

"Have you eaten yet?" Kim Mi-Young asked.

"No, not yet. I woke up not too long ago," I replied.

"If it's okay with you…"

"I'm okay. It seems like you've already eaten, so I don't want to bother you. About your children…" I pointed.

"*Oh!* Kids, could you go into your rooms?" she asked them.

"Okay!" they answered.

The kids ran to their rooms.

"Your kids are nice," I commented.

"They've matured at a young age… it makes life easier, but I do feel bad at times. By the way, may I ask what brought you here?" she asked.

"There are just a few things I needed to check. As I've mentioned earlier, I also want to discuss your contract. Your annual income will be 700 gold," I replied, smiling.

"Excuse me?"

It was a big amount. I was sure the amount was difficult for her to imagine because she was a staff member, not a party member. 700 gold was about 70 million won and it was an amount that wasn't easy to get even in Korea.

"700 gold. I'll increase your income based on your performance later on," I added.

“Th-That’s too…”

“It’s not too much,” I said, interrupting her.

‘Because that’s how much work you’ll be doing… ’

“I already know that you’re working more than what you’re getting paid. The benefits in the contract will also change, so you can look through them later,” I told her.

“Th-Thank you,” she said.

“Read it carefully and sign it. You don’t have to do it today.” I instructed her.

“All right…”

“*Oh!* There’s a different reason for me visiting you today…”

“Hm?”

“I was wondering if you could tell me about Miss Jo Hye-Jin.”

“Well, like I’ve mentioned yesterday, she’s a good worker and…”

“I’m not talking about those things. Please tell me the kind of tasks she has worked on, which documents she approved the pay for, the conversations she had, the issues she had while working, and other things you can remember while I was gone. It’s fine even if it’s something trivial. Tell me her personality, actions, any strange actions so far, and her normal behavior,” I explained.

“I see…”

“Obviously, this conversation will be a secret between us,” I said, emphasizing my words.

“Yes, of course…” she replied with her voice lowered.

Kim Mi-Young’s eyes widened and she looked as if she didn’t know what was going on.

“Is there an issue with Miss Jo Hye-Jin?” she asked, concerned.

“There isn’t really an issue, but it can be a problem if she’s too clean. Actually, I should give you some information first, but you’re the only one who should know about this,” I warned her.

“Okay…”

“Miss Jo Hye-Jin moved from Castle Rock to Lindel because she was a whistleblower. After exposing the guild’s corruption, she was kicked out and the news must have spread because she couldn’t join other guilds within Castle Rock, which caused her to move to Lindel. I’m certain Mr. Hyun-Sung already knew about this while I used other methods to gather this information,” I explained.

“I see…” she mumbled, nodding.

“Of course, she did the right thing, but I’m still worried and that’s the reason why I asked you those questions. Do you understand now?” I asked.

“Yes… I do,” she answered.

I was sure she understood. My questions were basically this…

‘Have you done anything that could be considered suspicious? If so, does Jo Hye-Jin know about it?’

“I understand what you’re worried about, sub guild master.” Kim Mi-Young nodded.

“I’m glad…”

“But rest assured. You don’t have to worry too much about it. I’ve already handled the things that could potentially be a problem… I’ve already taken care of the potion factory, the taxes, and the incident with the Free City of Celia. I’ve already reported these to the guild master,” she explained.

“*Oooh!*”

This was good news.

“Miss Jo Hye-Jin was mostly involved in the crisis response team and the dungeon

strategy team which required her to be directly present. I don't know exactly what happened since I have no idea about the details…" she said.

"No, it's fine…" I told her.

"The guild itself is very transparent. We didn't break any laws and everything is done legally, so you don't have to worry," she added.

"I'm glad. What about the ethical aspect? *Oh,* you can just tell me your honest feelings," I said.

When I glanced at Kim Mi-Young, she nodded and continued. "We've monopolized the potion market to the point that small clans and private alchemy businesses can't do anything about it, but… there are no legal issues. Once we start the Lindel alchemy support business, there won't be any ethical issues since the Blue Guild has a good image. As such, there won't be any other issues as well."

She must've felt embarrassed when I looked at her because she lowered her head. I knew it because I picked her, but she was *very* competent. She was different from me because I was more of a street-smart guy. Unlike me who only knew how to instigate, fabricate and deceive people, Kim Mi-Young was *actually* smart. Having a lot of competent subordinates was a good thing because using people like her would make me look competent as well.

"That's great." I commended.

"Thank you…"

'I think you should be paid more.'

After drawing a line on the annual income portion of the contract, I wrote a different amount. I added 300 gold to the income I originally offered and made it 1,000 gold. I saw her eyes widen, but I spoke as if it was nothing.

"You're getting paid this much based on your skills. I really like how you handled the tasks that could potentially become problematic ahead of time," I explained.

"It's… nothing compared to your kindness…" she responded in a low voice.

"No, I wouldn't call it kindness. I merely picked up a jewel that was lying around. *Oh,*

was there anything else? Has the guild master given Miss Hye-Jin some sort of authority?" I asked.

"Objectively speaking…"

"Yes?"

"I felt like it was a bit too much. I understand when a person is given a good position based on their skills or character, but the authority she was given was a lot more than I imagined…" she said.

"Strictly speaking, wouldn't you say you're the same, team leader Kim Mi-Young?" I asked her with a smile.

"I-I'm just an attorney that handles your tasks for you, sub guild master. It's nothing more and nothing less," she replied.

"*Hm.*"

"Miss Hye-Jin is different. After recruiting Miss Jo Hye-Jin into the guild, not only did he immediately give her tasks, but the guild master also immediately gave her authoritative rights for several things. It was just a rumor, but I've heard people saying that Miss Jo Hye-Jin was going to become the guild's chief secretary. I understand the Blue Guild's motto, but many are becoming more concerned because she has been given more authority than the other party members," Kim Mi-Young explained.

"I see…"

"Apart from Miss Jo Hye-Jin's character and abilities…"

"I understand what you're saying," I said, interrupting her.

Obviously, Kim Mi-Young wasn't envious of Jo Hye-Jin. She wasn't the type to be jealous and her opponent was on a different level to begin with. No matter how smart she was, Jo Hye-Jin was a strong, powerful person. Basically, she was a competent person who was guaranteed success. Setting aside Jo Hye-Jin's character, Kim Mi-Young was more concerned about giving so much power to one person in a short period of time.

“Your authority may also…”

It was a bit surprising that she was worried about my authority as well.

“I’m thankful that you’re worried about me too,” I said, smiling.

“O-of course…”

“The guild master did mention that he’ll decide on Miss Jo Hye-Jin’s key position after coming to an agreement with you, but it feels like he has already made up his mind,” Kim Mi-Young added.

“*Hm.*”

‘The guild’s chief secretary… ’

Judging from the position alone, it had similar authoritative power as the sub guild master. Of course, I was in a higher position, but a chief secretary would work directly with the guild master, so I was sure she would have a lot of power. I was certain Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t going to split the power and create a two-party system. He must have happily imagined how compatible Jo Hye-Jin and I would be, as well as how much progress the Blue Guild would make when two talented people worked together, but unfortunately, she and I were like oil and water. I could understand that Kim Hyun-Sung must’ve not noticed that we were incompatible since he couldn’t read other people’s status windows, but…

‘She’s too much… ’

I understood why my Hyun-Sung failed in his past life. He must have gotten himself backstabbed by people like me.

‘I’m sure of it… ’

CHAPTER 148
WHISTLEBLOWER (3)

I didn't know exactly what Kim Hyun-Sung experienced in his past life but considering that his potential was high, it was basically confirmed that he was strong. If Hyun-Sung had Jo Hye-Jin as his secretary in his past life, I was certain the guild Kim Hyun-Sung led was not only inflexible, but they were probably the most old-fashioned guild of that time. If it were me or Lee Ji-Hye, we wouldn't have a hard time breaking down those walls. I had an idea as to why my regressor failed. Robbing the weak was easier than backstabbing and since there were many people like me, I was sure he had a difficult time growing his guild. He must have gotten himself backstabbed once by Jung Jin-Ho and there was also a high chance that he had been bullied by Ito Sota.

'What would you do without me, Hyun-Sung?'

He probably suffered quite a bit because of Lee Seol-Ho. Assuming that Ito Sota settled down in Lindel thanks to Lee Seol-Ho's help, Ito Sota would have gained a lot of power.

When I glanced to the side, I noticed team leader Kim Mi-Young looking at me.

"Is there anything I should…"

"No, it's fine. I think it would be best to keep an eye out for now. Actually, we need to have insurance, so I think we should create a ledger of materials in case the imperial auditors visit us." I suggested.

"Okay! I'll do that," she said, agreeing with my suggestion.

"Having you here makes me feel reassured," I told her.

"Th-Thank you…"

"I'm sorry for taking up your time on your day off. I'll head out now, so please take a good rest," I said.

"It's fine. I'm glad I could help…"

Despite talking to Kim Mi-Young, I couldn't stop thinking about Jo Hye-Jin. Nothing was decided yet, but being able to control her was my homework because the Blue Guild had already accepted Jo Hye-Jin. Kim Hyun-Sung trusted her and when thinking about their relationship in their past life, there was a good chance that their connection wouldn't break. Moreover, her potential and strength also made it natural for us to accept her.

'The problem is how… '

How should I accept her?

'Should I flirt with her?'

The best way to make her fall for me was to put her in the same state as Jung Ha-Yan where she would end up relying on me, but having that thought in the first place was making me feel overly self-conscious. Both Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young had experienced side effects because of *that* plan, so I didn't want Jo Hye-Jin to end up the same way.

'My chance of succeeding is low too… '

It became clear after thinking about her nature.

After saying goodbye to Kim Mi-Young, I left her dorm, but I felt lost for some reason.

I thought about wanting to take a break and not think about anything, but I couldn't do such a thing because of the situation and my personality. It didn't take me long to decide on a destination because there was only one place that I had to go to at this point.

'Hyun-Sung… '

The one with the most power within the Blue Guild. I had to discuss future plans as well as Jo Hye-Jin with Kim Hyun-Sung. He was the only one that knew what was going to happen in the future and based on that future, he would make reasonable decisions.

'This isn't a break at all… '

I was busy the moment I woke up.

“Is the guild master here?” I asked.

“He’s probably in his office…”

“*Oh,* okay…”

I wasn’t sure if it was supposed to make me feel better, but I wasn’t the only one working. I guess Kim Hyun-Sung had a lot of things he had to take care of and plan out because he was stuck in his office. This was the best time to talk about work. When I walked and knocked on the door, I heard him telling me to come in. When I opened the door, I noticed Kim Hyun-Sung leaning on his desk and I also saw Jo Hye-Jin looking at me.

“*Oh…”*

I didn’t expect him to have a guest.

“Good timing. I was actually going to call for you, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“I see…”

“Have you eaten yet?” he asked.

“No, not yet,” I replied.

“Then how about we eat together…”

“Yeah, sure,” I said, nodding.

‘It’s bothering me a lot more than I thought… ’

I finally understood why Jung Ha-Yan went crazy every time I was with another woman. Of course, this situation was different, but I was really bothered by the conversation that Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung had. It was to the point that I felt kind of frustrated at the thought that they were having a conversation without me. For Jung Ha-Yan, she was worried I might do something with another woman and this was the moment when I felt bad for my past self when I couldn’t understand her actions.

'I'll be more careful from now on, Ha-Yan… '

After apologizing to Jung Ha-Yan in my head, Kim Hyun-Sung spoke. "Did you have any business with me?"

"I do. It's nothing serious, though…"

"Go ahead," he said.

Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes were full of affection when he looked at me, but this was natural since he trusted me before I even gave him the griffon as a gift.

"It's nothing serious. I was just curious about our future plans…" I told him.

"*Oh…*"

"The guild has somewhat stabilized thanks to Miss Hye-Jin, so I think it'll be good to go on an expedition. It's time for me to return to my original position, too… so I wanted to know if you thought the same," I explained.

"Yes, I've been thinking about that," he replied, nodding.

'I knew it.'

"I think it would be best to tell you ahead of time since you're working on various things and would need to make time for the expedition," he said.

"Yes, you're right, Mr. Hyun-Sung." I agreed.

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't going to abandon me during an expedition. I had proven my worth in the previous dungeon, so I was sure he thought bringing me along would benefit the party. Unlike the other mages, I was lacking in offense, but I had the ability to take care of Jung Ha-Yan's mentality, be flexible and deal with unexpected situations, as well as care for the party as a whole. I must have done more than he thought. Kim Hyun-Sung probably wanted to see me grow as an alchemist, so I was certain he wouldn't turn me into one of those gramps who simply stayed in their rooms. If he decided to exclude me from the expedition, that was when I need to start worrying because I had to go with them to acquire items.

"Nothing has been decided yet, but you're right, Mr. Ki-young. It's important to

expand our streams of income through different businesses, but we have money to spare thanks to Mr. Ki-Young, so it won't be so bad to go on an expedition. There has been a lot on my mind, so I think it would be best to tell you ahead of time," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"All right…"

"I think our next destination is going to be Castle Rock," he said.

"…Castle Rock?" I mumbled.

"Yes…"

'This will make Lady Marilyn happy… '

"I don't know about the details, but I heard that the monsters in Castle Rock have been showing anomalies. People have been saying that maybe they've been affected by the dungeon nearby or an epic-ranked named monster appeared," he added.

"*Hm…"*

"The chances are low, but it could be a sign of a monster wave. There are a lot of hunting grounds in Castle Rock, so I don't think it'll be a bad idea to go on an expedition. What do you think, Mr. Ki-Young?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I agree with you, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I think it's a good idea. It's a bit surprising that it's happening in Castle Rock and not near Lindel… since Miss Hye-Jin is from Castle Rock, she'll be able to help us. Isn't that right?" I said.

"Yes, sub guild master. I know the areas nearby very well," Jo Hye-Jin answered.

"I haven't mentioned this to you yet, but I was thinking about expanding the sales of the basic potion. Of course the expedition is the priority, but making a distribution contract with other guilds isn't a bad idea either. Aren't there a lot of stable guilds in Castle Rock?" I said to Jo-Hye Jin.

"Yes… sub guild master. They're not as big compared to Lindel, but the market isn't that bad because the majority of the guilds and clans survive by going on expeditions. There also aren't that many priests compared to Lindel," Jo Hye-Jin explained.

'Is that right?'

When I glanced to the side, Jo Hye-Jin didn't look so happy. Despite answering, she was biting her lips as if she was afraid of getting caught, so I was guessing she also hadn't heard about Kim Hyun-Sung's plan to go to Castle Rock. It was natural that she didn't want to see the people she felt uncomfortable around, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed as if he really wanted to take her there.

'I wonder if this expedition is going to be a difficult one… '

Kim Hyun-Sung had already answered that question. It could be a simple dungeon conquest or an epic-ranked named monster raid.

'It could be a monster wave too… '

At this point, I knew we were only heading to Castle Rock to fix the issue that was going to happen in the future. I was sure that I would get an idea once we headed toward Castle Rock, but I couldn't deny the fact that I was going to benefit from this because we were heading there to raise our party's worth. Most importantly, I could find out more about Jo Hye-Jin, too.

'This is the best.'

It was my chance to talk with the executives of the Small Stone Guild, but of course, I was going to visit them as a businessman.

Kim Hyun-Sung directed a regretful look at Jo Hye-Jin when she suddenly stopped talking, but he didn't seem like he was going to change his mind.

"How should we start preparing, Mr. Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

"*Hm…"*

I decided to strike while the iron was hot so I continued talking while the regressor was in the middle of contemplation. "How about leaving tomorrow? We can get the supplies later, but regarding the potion distribution, there's something I need to personally find out."

"I see. I thought about leaving after a month or two later, but I don't think that's a bad idea. The problem is, where are we going to stay?" he asked.

“You don’t have to worry about that. I’m kind of close to the daughter of Castle Rock’s feudal lord, so I’m sure I can borrow the lord’s castle,” I replied.

“*Oooh!*”

Lady Marilyn would welcome me with open arms.

Even after arriving at the cafeteria and eating our meal, we continued talking about the Castle Rock expedition. Jo Hye-Jin didn’t say much and Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was trying to be considerate of her.

‘It has already been confirmed that she has bad memories of that place.’

Going to Castle Rock was unavoidable, but I guess it was happening a lot faster than Jo Hye-Jin thought. Considering the fact that it hadn’t been that long since she entered Lindel, I was sure that she was still the talk of the town in Castle Rock. Besides that, our other conversations were pretty ordinary. It was the usual conversation and they weren’t that bad. Kim Hyun-Sung sounded like he was intentionally complimenting Jo Hye-Jin and was trying to appeal to her strengths, but when we were finishing our food, I realized why Kim Hyun-Sung said those words.

When Jo Hye-Jin left her seat, he spoke first. “What do you think, Mr. Ki-Young?”

“Excuse me?”

“About Miss Hye-Jin,” he answered.

“I don’t think she’s a bad person. She’s skilled and has a good character, so I understand why you recruited her. When thinking about her power and growth potential, any guild would want her,” I replied.

“I’m glad. I was worried that you were uncomfortable around her.” He sighed in relief.

‘Why would I bluntly say I was uncomfortable around her? You’re so slow… ’

“I know it’s all happening fast, but like I mentioned yesterday, I want to give Miss Hye-Jin a key position… what do you think, Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

This was probably the reason why he wanted to call me earlier. He looked like he was

looking forward to my answer. It was good that he respected my opinion, but I couldn't help but feel burdened by the current situation.

'Sigh… '

"I…"

Before answering, I had to think about it again.

CHAPTER 149
YOU DON'T KNOW WHY I'M FEELING UPSET? (1)

"I…"

Before answering, I had to think about it again because I obviously knew what kind of answer Kim Hyun-Sung wanted to hear. Personally, I didn't want her to gain more power than she needed, so getting rid of her was the right thing to do, but I also wanted to show him that I didn't want to push her out. It wasn't easy killing two birds with one stone, but it was worth a try because I didn't want him to think that I desired power.

'The fact that he asked for my opinion is good.'

"Before I answer, could you tell me exactly which key position you want to give her?" I asked.

I already knew it was going to be the guild's chief secretary, but I wanted to ask again because he had never mentioned which position it was and I was sure he was hiding something.

"I've thought of many different positions, but…"

"Yes?"

"If it's alright with you, I thought about giving her the guild's chief secretary position," he answered.

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"The guild's chief secretary," he repeated.

"*Oh…* I see," I said.

“I’ve… been thinking about many things and It'll make things easier for you as well since you've been taking care of many tasks. Miss Hye-Jin will be able to assist you in different ways,” Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

“*Hmmm…*”

“I’m sure you’ll be surprised once you see how she handles her tasks,” he added.

“I see…”

“She helped a lot in unimaginable things,” he said.

“*Oh…*”

I was definitely against it. While I was thinking about how I should oppose it, I noticed Kim Hyun-Sung’s anxious look.

‘Oh… ’

I immediately realized why he had that expression. First, I was sure that my expression told him that I didn’t agree with his suggestion and second, he seemed bothered that he was trying to put her in a key position without discussing it with me first. Even though he asked for my opinion just now, he was bothered that he thought of doing it on his own and immediately gave her the offer.

‘This cute bastard… ’

He thought I was going to be really happy and agree to his suggestion, but it ruined his surprise when I didn't agree. He probably couldn't help but panic when I, the recipient of the surprise, was unhappy with it. Actually, no. Not only was I unhappy, but I was showing an uncomfortable expression so he was probably anxious about it. Naturally, he thought that he made a mistake, which was possible because Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t a self-righteous person. I didn’t know what kind of mistakes he had made in his first life, but since he had been backstabbed so many times, he took great care of the party’s mentality and condition especially when it came to me. It was obvious when I recalled the sad expression he had when I left for the Holy Empire.

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t a dictator and even though he was the guild master of the Blue Guild, he knew what he lacked and he always kept in mind that he needed the

help of others. It was the ideal attitude, but… anyway, I was at the top of the list of people who could help him.

'Obviously… '

I spoke after reading this expression again. "I'm not sure…"

"*Oh…"* he mumbled.

"It's true that Miss Hye-Jin is competent, but I think it's too soon and it would be better if we observed her a bit more… *Oh!* But I do understand your reasoning, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You made that decision because I had a lot of work… and… it's somewhat of a reasonable decision," I explained.

"I see…"

"But if she suddenly becomes the guild's chief secretary, I think it could cause discomfort amongst the other guild members, but of course, this is just my personal opinion. We need more time… From the guild staff members' point of view, they may see Miss Hye-Jin as a CEO who suddenly got authority when she was never involved with the company up until now," I explained even more.

"I did have those thoughts as well, but I thought that they were getting along well while you were away so…" he started to explain.

"I'm the only one that hasn't seen it…" I said, interrupting him.

"*Oh.*"

Even though I didn't directly say it, it was only natural for him to figure out my feelings. When I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung with a really disappointed look, he flinched.

'I'm pretty disappointed, Hyun-Sung.'

I was obviously acting, but he seemed more flustered than before. He asked about my opinion, thinking that it wouldn't be a big issue, but I didn't think he imagined things would turn out like this. The corner of my lips went up at the thought that Kim Hyun-Sung was being considerate of me, but I didn't make it obvious. Sighing, giving short answers, or showing him that I was disappointed was pretty effective

and he must have realized the atmosphere around us was becoming strange as we discussed Jo Hye-Jin's position.

"That's not what I meant," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No, I trust you, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You've made all the right decisions up until now. Personally, I think it's a bit too much, but I'm sure there's something I'm not aware of," I told him.

"That's not it…"

"It should be fine. I'm grateful that you asked me, but you're the guild master, so you can do whatever you want," I added.

"I think there's a misunderstanding," he started to explain.

"No, no. There's no misunderstanding…"

"I personally thought of this because you seemed like you were having a hard time, Mr. Ki-Young. I wasn't going to give her the position right away and since Miss Hye-Jin seems burdened by it…"

"I see…" I nodded, interrupting him.

"Yes…"

I expected him to react that way because people in this kind of situation usually said things like 'It was all for you,' but he wasn't comforting me regarding his attitude earlier. I wasn't angry or frustrated, but when I continued to express my disappointment, Kim Hyun-Sung seemed frustrated. Being generous not only applied to couples but in every human relationship, too.

'He probably doesn't know why I'm acting this way.'

If I had to give an example, it was like a girl asking her boyfriend why he didn't know the reason she was mad at him and of course, it was more effective than I imagined. It did break my heart seeing my regressor suffer, but I had to delay Jo Hye-Jin's rise to authority as much as possible.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung… you can forget about what I told you earlier since it was just my

personal opinion. If you believe Miss Hye-Jin is the right person for the role, you can give her the role," I told him.

'Take this!'

"There isn't any kind of misunderstanding because it's understandable for you to think that way, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I added.

'I'm totally misunderstanding. Hyun-Sung! I misunderstood what you're saying!'

"I'm not disappointed either," I said in a low voice.

'Your hyung is disappointed; very disappointed!'

I was saying the opposite of my actual feelings. I was saying that I was fine, but from Kim Hyun-Sung's point of view, I was certain it would be difficult to appoint her because no matter how stupid he was, he wasn't *this* slow. I was sure he was thinking about a lot of things right now.

'I managed to buy some time… '

It was confirmed that Jo Hye-Jin was going to eventually take a key position and I believe I needed to possess a certain amount of power to utilize her properly in the future because it would be a waste to not use a competent person like her.

Her image as a whistleblower helped. If she officially settled in the Blue Guild, then Jo Hye-Jin could be used as a marketing tool to appeal to the public. Using such a powerful and smart person as *only* a party member was a stupid thing to do. The problem was the time she would take on that position. In the current situation, she and I were basically playing tug-o-war over power. As someone making assumptions, I was basically shadowboxing because even though I didn't have a definite method, if the issues around her got resolved, then I was prepared to use her more than anyone else in the guild—I would treat her like a dog.

"Well, I'll be going now, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I told him.

"Excuse me?" he asked.

"I'm done eating and we need to make preparations for the expedition," I explained.

“I understand…”

“I’ll make the order to include basic items, but if you need anything else, please send me a document of what you need,” I said to him.

“Well…”

It was time for me to go and when I slightly opened the door, I saw a guild staff member.

“Mr. Ki-Young!”

That was when Kim Hyun-Sung called out for me and grabbed my arm. For some reason, my attention was on him. I wasn’t sure why, but even the guild staff member blushed. Usually, female staff members would scream in situations like this.

‘What the… ’

“There’s… something else.”

The people around us noticed that something was going on because they made comments like, ‘I told you!’ or ‘Oh my gosh!’ I even heard someone say that our girlfriends were just a front and I immediately realized what they were talking about.

‘That’s not it… shit… ’

“It… It was wrong of me to think that way, Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

‘I got it, so please let me go of me… ’

“I didn’t have any other intentions and was simply thinking about making your workload lighter, Mr. Ki-Young…” He continued.

‘They’re going to have weird thoughts… ’

When I heard someone scream, I immediately closed the door. Despite that, I could still hear Kim Hyun-Sung talking. “As you mentioned earlier, I think it would be best to delay it. If you had been surprised, I sincerely apologize. I also thought it was strange to talk to you about this since you’ve just returned to the guild,” he explained.

"No, that's…"

"I'm sure you need time to get to know Miss Hye-Jin and I understand the other guild members feeling out of place because of it. Of course, I'm sure you feel the same way. It's natural for you to be flustered and disappointed. I don't know what I was thinking," he added, apologetic.

Kim Hyun-Sung was sincerely apologizing and even though there had been a strange misunderstanding, it wasn't that bad. Now, it became clear that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't the only one who didn't know how to maintain a relationship. Despite living another life, the regressor still struggled in maintaining a relationship. He was inflexible with a simple personality.

'Kind-hearted mediator.'

It was amazing how he maintained his humanity despite experiencing many things in his past life. When considering the fact that the way Kim Hyun-Sung looked had changed compared to when I first met him in the tutorial dungeon, he definitely looked like someone who was trying to find the thing he had lost in his past life.

'Not bad… '

An affectionate regressor was a good thing, but if I were in his position, I wouldn't directly apologize in a strange situation like this.

'Still, it's not that bad at all.'

I spoke while looking at him. "No, it's really fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung."

It was half-true.

'This hyung will forgive you… '

CHAPTER 150
YOU DON'T KNOW WHY I'M FEELING UPSET? (2)

“So what happened, hyung-nim? Did you work everything out?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Can’t you tell? It worked out very well,” I answered.

“*Ah…*”

“What?” I asked.

It had been a day since I had a slightly serious conversation with Kim Hyun-Sung. Park Deok-Gu spoke while packing, “It’s nothing. It was just a bit unexpected. By the way, how’s our bro?”

I wasn’t sure how to describe it, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed a bit discouraged yesterday. It was as if he was possessed by a spirit from his past life. I didn’t know what Jo Hye-Jin meant to Kim Hyun-Sung, but he must have realized that he was making a mistake. I understand she made a good impression while I was gone, but it was unreasonable for him to put her in a key position without persuading me first. His excuse was that he was doing it for me, but being extremely conscious about his past didn’t make him look good and in the end, he realized his mistake…

‘He kind of looked like a puppy.’

He really did look like a puppy and I was sure he expected a positive answer from me. I really wanted to praise him, but right now, cutting down Jo Hye-Jin’s authority would make it easier for me to move. At the very least, I had to maintain this status until team leader Kim Mi-Young was done with her work. The reason I gave for rejecting her was that she hadn't completely fit in with the guild just yet and setting her skills aside, there *were* rumors that Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung were in a relationship so it was a very convincing reason. Of course, there was an even *stranger* rumor spreading right now, but the misunderstanding regarding my relationship with Kim Hyun-Sung would be resolved with time.

'He probably doesn't know about it, though… '

Even if I exclude my personal opinion, it wasn't the best time to give Jo Hye-Jin a key position.

'Being too biased in the first place isn't good… '

Basically, I was more than enough to be in *that* position within the Blue Guild and as I looked at Park Deok-Gu, I replied to him, "He seemed a bit disappointed, but he still accepted it."

"That's a relief, but…"

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"It's nothing. It's just a bit interesting to see you two having different opinions. *Ahem*," he answered with a cough.

"There wasn't really any conflict between us," I told him.

"No way! I've heard the rumors…" Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

"What did you hear?" I asked.

"Well, aside from what the female guild employees were saying, I heard you and the bro fought each other. You two were supposedly fighting in the cafeteria. Is that true?" he asked.

"*Oh…*"

"Wait, wait! Did you actually quarrel?" he asked.

"It wasn't that big of a deal. You don't have to worry because we didn't fight and it was just a misunderstanding. I was a bit disappointed that he made an important decision like that on his own and that he only told me at the last second…" I explained.

"So…"

"He apologized and everything is back to normal now. If I continued to reject Jo Hye-

Jin, then I'm sure there will be conflict. Of course, that won't really happen because she's competent and the guild needs someone like her. *Oh!* Don't go telling people about our conversation…" I warned him.

"Of course! My lips are sealed," he said with a grin.

"Did you pack everything we prepared?" I asked.

"Almost everything," he answered.

"I can check it, right?" I asked with a smile.

"W-Wait, give me some time," he stuttered.

"We haven't gone on a long expedition for a while so we shouldn't make any mistakes," I told him.

When I looked around, I saw people preparing for the expedition. Park Deok-Gu was quickly packing items while snooping around while Hwang Jung-Yeon was assisting him. Jung Ha-Yan, Sun Hee-Young, and Kim Ye-Ri were also busy packing their bags. The majority of the party members were surprised when we suddenly told them that we were leaving for Castle Rock, but since they were experienced, they managed to load everything we needed in the carriage in time.

The guild members were busier than the party members and I could hear loud noises everywhere.

"Are you sure you got the supplies there?" Park Joong-Ki asked.

"Yes, sir. The last one just went out."

"Okay, so… the alchemy kit, consumable catalysts, and the spare equipment were placed in the storage," he mumbled.

"Include the griffon's food, too," I ordered.

"Okay…"

"Cast basic protection magic on the items so they won't go bad and tell the team to be on standby while I check the items again," I told him.

“Yes, sir.”

This was why we created and paid for the expedition support team’s salary. It was nice seeing them prepare everything for the expedition without me having to check for every little detail.

“Excuse me, sir. I heard this expedition was going to be a long one, but I think this is a *lot* of items. You have a lot to purchase from Castle Rock and… the supplies are over the budget…” a guild staff member said.

“The guild master requested them himself, so just get the items listed there. Our job isn’t to be curious and ask questions. Our job is to deliver the supplies without any issues,” Park Joong-Ki replied.

“Yes, sir.”

It was true that there were a lot more supplies this time compared to our other expeditions, but I was sure Park Joong-Ki understood very well. He couldn’t say anything since the guild master himself gave the order, but I also thought it was strange how there were a lot more supplies than normal. But I discovered why after considering the situation in Castle Rock. I wasn’t sure if the people at Castle Rock knew what was happening to their city right now, but Kim Hyun-Sung said that something was definitely *going* to happen in Castle Rock.

‘A new dungeon? A monster wave? A named monster?’

While looking at the supplies, I immediately found the answer.

‘It’s so obvious, Hyun-Sung… ’

It was natural to be prepared for anything since we were moving far from Lindel, but preparing thousands of arrows for Kim Ye-Ri, who wasn’t *just* an archer, would make anyone feel flustered and it wasn’t just the arrows… Even the potion factory was working hard to fulfill the quantity Kim Hyun-Sung had requested for the basic HP potion. At this point, it became obvious what was going to happen in Castle Rock because it felt like we were preparing for a big battle. As Kim Hyun-Sung said, I was sure it was to prepare for any situation, but I realized this wasn't a simple dungeon capture when I saw that he, someone who knew the future, was overly preparing.

‘It’s a monster wave or a raid.’

Personally, I was leaning more toward the monster wave and even though I felt anxious, I was looking forward to it. If Kim Hyun-Sung was personally going to a dangerous place, then it meant the reward was *that* great.

"We'll probably get a lot of experience points, right?" I said to myself.

"Sorry?"

"*Oh,* it's nothing. Have you packed everything, Miss Hee-Young?" I asked.

"Yes, I packed all my personal belongings," she answered.

"What about the others?" I asked.

"Everyone is done packing and I checked Ye-Ri's and Miss Ha-Yan's bags myself. I think Miss Hye-Jin is also done, so we should be good to go," she said.

"That's good. Then I'll tell our guild master that we're all ready to go," I told her.

"Okay…"

They were all good to go. Now, all I had to do was check the supplies.

"Team leader Park Joong-Ki." I called out.

"Sub guild master."

"I trust that you've prepared everything on the list without any issues."

"Yes, but since the preparations are so sudden, there are a few missing items. Of course, once the potions are made, we'll make sure it's sent to Castle Rock right away. I would like to check one last time, but are you sure you want us to send all of these supplies?" he asked, confirming.

"Yes, team leader Park Joong-Ki. Please make sure there are no mistakes. Actually, if there's room, please send additional supplies. Thank you for your hard work. *Oh!* If we need to add more items later, I'll send a carrier pigeon and let you know," I told him.

"Okay…"

Everything was prepared and Kim Hyun-Sung appeared at the perfect time, so I didn't need to run over to him and report about the expedition preparations because the carriage was ready to leave.

"We can leave now, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I said.

"Okay, thank you for your help. You didn't need to come out and check everything…" he whispered.

"I get anxious if I don't check everything myself," I told him with a smile.

"I feel reassured having you here, Mr. Ki-Young," he said.

'Of course, you do… '

"It wasn't a difficult task. There will be a total of 13 people in the expedition party. It'll be me, Hwang Jung-Yeon, Park Deok-Gu, Jung Ha-Yan, Sun Hee-Young, Kim Ye-Ri, Jo Hye-Jin, and five guild staff members. Excluding the potions that still need to be made, the remaining have been loaded on the carriage and after they finish making the remaining potions, they'll send another carriage over to us," I explained.

"Okay…"

"Counselor Lee Sang-Hee, team leader Kim Mi-Young, and the other team leaders will take care of the guild," I added.

"Got it. Let's head out then." Kim Hyun-Sung nodded.

"Sure…"

After the guild members got on the carriage, I started moving as well. It'd be quicker if I rode my griffon, but it would take some time to arrive in Castle Rock by carriage. We had supplies we needed to take with us and the ride to Castle Rock wasn't going to be a smooth one. It was a pretty stable place, so considering the fact that we didn't have to worry about monsters ambushing us, this was nothing more than going on a picnic. I was sure that we would arrive there in no time and I could rest in the meantime.

"It has been a while since we've been on an expedition; I'm getting excited," Park Deok-Gu said.

“We didn’t come out to have fun, so keep your guard up. You can rest until we reach Castle Rock,” I told him.

“*Ahem*, hyung-nim, don’t you think you’re being too strict?” he asked.

“*Hahahaha*.”

Kim Hyun-Sung laughed at Park Deok-Gu’s words. There was a calm after the storm and it applied to both Kim Hyun-Sung and me. I wasn’t sure if it was just me, but I felt like our relationship had gotten stronger. I couldn’t help but laugh after recalling how flustered he look yesterday. I knew Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t a bad person, but after yesterday’s incident, I became even more confident in him.

There were a lot of things I had to do. I had to find out more about Jo Hye-Jin and distribute the potion I made. Not only did I have to meet with Lady Marilyn, but I might even have to visit the shrine. I wasn’t sure if there was going to be a monster wave or a named monster, but I also had to handle the issues surrounding the city itself, but out of all of those tasks, there was one that was a bit more important than the others.

‘Hyun-Sung, this hyung will make sure you don’t get backstabbed… ’

Just then…

[Epic-ranked Mind’s Eye’s rank will increase.]

‘What?’

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